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A SEVENTH
CONTINENT

ATTEMPTS TOWARDS NEW
INTERNATIONALISM IN THE ARTS

A.W. Prins (e.d.)

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

A.W. Prins (e.d.)

This book presents the proceedings of 'A Seventh Continent', a congress that took place in Rotterdam, in September 1995. The congress was organized by Rotterdam Festivals in close collaboration with the Rotterdam Foundation, on the ocassion of the multicultural manifestation 'R 95': 'Rotterdam, Boundless City'.

During four days, artists, curators, art-historians, art-councilors and philosophers from various intellectual and cultural backgrounds discussed the dilemma's and challenges of art-practices in the 'multiverse of cultures', an expression coined by Ernst Bloch to enunciate the ontological significance of multiculturalism. It is indeed a multiverse of cultures that we today live and work in. The complexity of the multicultural world forces us to be constantly alert where out-dated or inadequate concepts and ideas are concerned.

The congress 'A Seventh Continent' had a twofold aim. First, the often treacherously persisting 'dominance of western culture' was explored and exposed. In this context, one could think of the way in which so called 'western' definitions of art dominate the debate, or of the embarrassing situation that the debate generally takes place in western languages; those who want to enter the debate must often mould their thoughts in western concepts. The Congress also had a more visionary aim: the exploration in 'true internationalism': the acceptance of indentities and differences, of astonishment, bewilderment and alienation, of understanding and misunderstanding, and the courage to accept and respect the incomprehensible.

A detailed report of the congress and a summary of the contribution were published in 1996 by Rotterdam Festivals (A copy will be forwarded free of charge upon reguest by Rotterdam Festivals, William Boothlaan 4, 3012 VJ Rotterdam, The Netherlands).

Three contributions to the congress are not published in this book. Gilane Tawadros decided that her lecture was not ready for publication, Marianne Brouwer did not succeed in rewriting her lecture and - in spite of intensive e-mail correspondence - Sarat Maharaj failed to send me her text. Their participation in the discussion however, are concluded in the text. I regret the absence of their contributions and apologise to the other authors for having to wait so long to see their efforts in print.

Finally, I would like to thank Klazien de Vries for her conscientious processing of the taperecorded lectures and discussions into an editable text; furthermore, I thank Manon Geluk and Elizabeth Owensmith for their accurate typographical assistance.

1

MIGRATION
AND THE EMERGENCE OF
MULTICULTURALISM

Pieter Pekelharing

After the end of rhe cold war, people expected peace but a new range of conflicts broke out. conflicts between nations, ethnic communities, the whole phenomenon of nationalism and ethnicity returned. It is one of the tasks of philosophers to deal with this phenomenon. My thesis will be that if you want to see these problems in a historical perspective, migration is not new but a centuries old phenomenon. Multiculruralism on the contrary has only recently emerged.

I teach political philosophy and one of the strange rhings is that in rhe courses at our university rhe whole idea of culture was never dealt with. We rhoughr abour concepts like democracy, freedom and jusrice, but the notion of culture was never really elaborated on. Now we are finding our how important the idea of culture is, when dealing with ideas like freedom and justice. It is strange that we only now begin ro realize that about the whole idea of sovereignty, of a nation governing irself; we had three basic ideas. The first concerned a nation consisting of culrural undifferentiated individuals and the state, with nothing in between. The ideal was rhe absence of groups. Groups were thought of as constraining. In the name of freedom it was the best thing ro abolish all groups. There should be norhing but individuals and the state. Of course political theory pointed out that rhis was also a recipe for totalitarianism. The lack of coherence made

state dominance possible. Nowadays, we find out rhat the ideas of democracy and community have to be combined, we now realize that you have to think about the community itself because democracy consists of an idea that politicians are accountable to the community. But rhe question is: to what community? This is where the concept of culture comes in. The second phenomenon is that today, we realize that thinking about division of political powers between different levels of government is necessary when we talk about democracy. Democracy itself does not tell us anything about these different groups, rhar is a question of culture.

Why should we stop immigrants at the borders? Where and when do we have the right to limit rhe amount of immigrants?
People want to have access to the culture of a country, they wanr to have rheir own cultural heritage. These things can not be secured by individual rights only; the notions of culture and polirical philosophy become very connecred. What is rhe relation between one culture and another? What to do with the fact rhat culture not only influences individuals but is also made by individuals? Cultures are interacring, negotiating, overlapping. Where does one society stop and the other begin, in other words: what are boundaries?
Migration in Europe is a centuries old phenomenon. There has been circular

migration, when people move from one place to another and back again. We have seen forms of chain migration, people moving constantly from one place to another and permanent migration, when people stayed in the place they had moved to. All these kinds of migration have existed in Europe. If we look at the causes of migration, we find the structural and the individual reasons. Demographic and economic factors like population decline or growth, the relations of property ownerships, employment and the capital flow have played a major role in migration over the centuries. The rise of the modern state was another factor. As the provider of jobs and as protector of their own national borders and as deporter of groups that did not fit in their own nation. Together with war and environment problems, these are the structural causes that can be found for the migration waves.

The individual factors have to do with class, family, and sex. What we usually saw was young men immigrating, young men from the lower classes. As long as the women stayed at home, migration used to be temporary. The men returned home when they had earned enough money. In the villages where the women were left behind, the role of the women very often changed. They took over the tasks of men and became more
independent and thus the relationships between the sexes changed. When women began to migrate and families were reunited, we saw migrants becoming residents in a new area. When states tried to control migration, they especially tried to control the migration of women.

It is helpful to discern five periods when we look at the history of immigration. First of all the period between 1650 and 1750 when we see property relationships in the country as the main factor. The demographic pattern was stable, production was for local consumption, and capital was only in the cities. Migration had to do with seasonal labour. The men went away for the harvests and to the cities to work. It was a kind of circular migration. But slowly that picture started to change in the second half of the 18th century. People began to leave the cities and go into the country. The industry developed in the rural areas and a rural proletariat emerged. They found employment in the cottage industry.

Not until 1815, the time that the industrial revolution began, did big industrial cities like Birmingham, Liëge, and cities in the Ruhr area attract people. The rural area lost the cottage industry, agriculture was being mechanized and unemployment forced the people to go the factories in the cities.

From that time on we also see people from Portugal, Italy, Ireland and so on leaving the continent and immigrating to especially North and South America.

The fourth period begins with the First World War and ends with the end of World War II. For the first time there is an abrupt ending of international migration. Before thousands of people left the continent but from 1914 on, the United States restricted the amount of immigrants and the European countries closed their borders too. Passports were necessary from that time on and states tried to get rid of communities which did in their view not belong to the nation.

In World War II, more people than ever before were moved around. About 30 million people fled or were deported. An example: in 1944 Peter and Anna Naumoff, together with a number of other farmers from the Ukraine, were put in a wagon and transported to Germany. After three weeks, they arrived in Austria where they worked in an 'Arbeitslager'. In 1950, they were still in that camp. In the meantime, they had children. It took until 1960 before a country was found to take the Naumoffs in.

After World War II, there is again a rise of the cities. A belt of cities emerges, stretching from England, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg to the Ruhr area, then bending in the direction of Turin and Milan. The character of migration changes. Looking at the migrants within a country, we see that they are more educated, come from the higher classes. The migration between the countries still concerns people from the lower classes and very often migrants come from Northern Africa, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. This is the first time people from the Mediterranean migrate to the centre of Europe. Another new phenomenon is that many people from the former colonies move to Europe. For the first time in history, people move from the Third or Second world to the First world. Countries in Europe become immigration countries where they used to be emigration countries.

This new kind of migration, from the Mediterranean and the former colonies, is

strictly controlled by the European states. This is also a new development. There are contracts between the emigration country and the immigration country. The demand for employees to do the dirty and unhealthy work in the western European industry and agriculture is growing. The reason for the immigrants is very obvious. The lack of capital in their own countries forced them to emigrate. When the money does not come to the people, the people come to the money: employment and the expectation to improve their financial position. People often had to bribe the officials and lie to them to get to Europe. They pretended to be able to read and write for instance. Between 1965 and 1973 the number of foreigners in Europe rose to 20 million, not including the political refugees. About one out of seven employees in the industry in Germany and England is an immigrant, one out of four in France. In Frankfurt one third of the population consists of immigrants.

In the seventies, it was no longer only young men who left their home country, whole families immigrated. They started to use the social facilities, they became visible. Suddenly we realised that the foreign communities were supposed to be permanent in European countries. The problem of immigrant communities was not so much that they had different religions or came from another background, but that these communities emerged in a time when the population of Europe was much more homogeneous than before. Compartmentalization, differences between the classes and inequality in society were no longer hallmarks of our society like they were in the fifties. In Holland, everyone speaks the same language, goes to the same schools et cetera, in short: the population is much more homogeneous.

When people in the '70's started to realise that their country was turning into a multicultural society, they were not happy about it. To illustrate how strange that change can be is a little story from Michael Ignatieff's book *Blood & Belonging*: The Russian woman farmer Olga Oshcetzki, whose ancestors had come from Germany about 300 years ago, returns to Germany after the collapse of the Soviet Union. When she and her daughter arrive in Frankfurt 'they are very surprised by everything, by the twenty kinds of soap in the stores, for

example, and by the brutal speed of the traffic. But most of all, they are surprised by all the foreigners. "I thought I was coming to Germany", said Olga's daughter. "Instead, it's Turkey", she said, wrinkling her nose in dismay. She said this in Russian because she speaks no German.'

MULTICULTURALISM AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEW MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION

When European emigrants in the 19th century went to Australia and to the United States, they really left their homeland. They took their photos, they wrote once in a while, but they soon forgot about their past and adapted to their new country, that was the only option. There was no money to pay regular visits to the land they came from, so that identity slowly vanished. These things have changed. We travel by plane, communicate by fax or telephone. Migrants nowadays watch television in their own language, hire films from their own country and keep in touch with their own culture. The Moroccan butcher in Amsterdam or the Philippino maid in Hong Kong telephone their families, and send money to support them.

The consequence of this is the possibility to live in different places at the same time. This means that the necessity of adapting no longer exists in the same way it used to. Immigration countries therefore are no longer melting pots but become more and more multicultural societies in which roots and identity play a major role. A Polish immigrant in America one century ago was a Polish American, today he might call himself an American Pole. In the same way immigrants from Turkey in the Netherlands may see themselves as Dutch Turks. In America we see that American citizens can play a role in the politics of the country of their origin. People like Papandreou, prime minister of Greece, Milan Panic and Mohammed Sacirby from Bosnia did so. This phenomenon that people who are citizens from one country can participate in politics in another country, make it possible that civil wars are financed by 'nationalists at distance', as the anthropologist Benedict Anderson calls them. The Tamil Tigers in Jaffna are provided with money from Tamils in Toronto, London and elsewhere, who communicate by way of computers on Tamilnet. Communities in Germany, Austria,

Australia and the United States financed the Croats in the war in ex-Yugoslavia.

The connections which migrants have with their motherland are not only political but also economic. Many countries depend financially on money sent from abroad. Countries like India and Egypt suffered a severe financial loss because of the Gulf War. Guest workers in Kuwait were sent home without a penny.

The new communication media enable migrants to keep in touch and to have financial and political influence in their country and to hold their identity. The consequences of this development are tremendous, both for the motherland as for the immigration country. What to think about this, how to deal with this new society?

What happens to groups is also important for individuals. If we focus on the welfare of the individual, very often what happens to the group the individual belongs to, has a major influence on his or her well being. It is important to realize that if a group is suppressed, the individual is suppressed also. We have to think about how we live with these communities, how they can integrate in society without loosing their identity. Society gets more and more plural. How can liberal institutions promote the accommodation of these different groups, these migrant communities? Liberal rights are instruments of individual welfare. We think about groups as constraining, the liberal thought is more focused on individuals. The immigrant is a member of his community. The role, the expectations of a person is the result of tradition of the group of belonging. If a community is regarded as inferior, means that the options of the members are less than for a member of a respected community. Jews for example were accepted when they assimilated, when they gave up their background. They very often lost more than they gained by giving up their identity.

We must not only respect the freedom of individuals but also the right to belong. What we often do is give freedom but we are not so good in giving people the sense of belonging.

I want to conclude with four important points to make clear what multiculturalism should be. First, multiculturalism is only possible in a society with several communities which, stronger than before, maintain their own culture. They do not want to assimilate, do not want to become part of a melting pot. The acknowledgment of multiculturalism means that the state has to provide the means to enable groups to maintain that culture. That includes a certain access to resources, media et cetera. What does it mean to treat groups equally? We are intended to support different groups but we mostly do not want to support groups that systematically belong to the lower classes.

We must be aware of the danger of regarding cultures as static entities. Multiculturalism does not mean conserving cultures in their original purity. Cultures can and do change and new cultures will emerge.

The second point I want to stress that, as liberals, we have the task to respect each culture, not meaning that we value all cultures in the same way. The recognition of the values of other groups does not mean affirmation.

Liberal multiculturalism has to allow individuals to leave the culture they belong to. This exit-option has to be guaranteed. Tolerance stops when people from a culture suppress its members.

The last important point has to do with education. Children should be educated in their own culture, language and religion if the parents want them to be. But all children have to be educated in a way that they speak the language they live in as well. They have to be taught the culture, history and tradition of other cultures. Members of different groups should have the right to participate in the larger whole of society. They should have the possibility to participate in public life, politics and arts, and have an equal access to the media.

If these four conditions are complied with, there is hope that a flourishing, shared and common culture emerges in which people treat each other with respect, being aware of the fact that his or her freedom presupposes the freedom of all others.

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ISLAMIC
COMMUNITIES IN THE
NETHERLANDS

Ibrahim Spalburg

I would like to quote from the Quran to assure you that Islam tells all mankind to do the same. In chapter 49, 'Al Hoedjoeraat' which means 'The inner apartments', verse 13, God says to mankind: 'O, mankind! we created you from a single pair; a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Truly the most honoured of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things'.

I hope that this quotation of the verse of the Quran will remain in our minds for a while.

I thank the organizers of the festival for their invitation to participate in this symposium today, and I am glad that two mosques in Rotterdam have decided to participate in the festival and open their doors for visitors.

In this lecture, I will try to give you a general impression of the experiences of the majority of the muslim population living in the Netherlands. I will deal with three issues. First, I will try to expose the general attitude of the Dutch towards muslims. Secondly, I will speak about the attitude of muslims as a minority living in the Netherlands, and finally I will share with you my personal vision of the future prospects of Islam and the muslim minority in the Netherlands. Before dealing with these three issues, I want

to give you a brief report about my background.

I am an Afro-American. I was born in Surinam and came to the Netherlands in 1957. I was nine years old then. Through my connections with Indonesian people I embraced Islam in the summer of 1966. I studied Islam, and Arabic and Indonesian languages. At present, I am involved in the coordination of activities of the Platform Islamic Organization Rijnmond Foundation.

The general attitude towards Islam and Muslims in the Netherlands in 1995 is still based on prejudiced Christian interpretations from medieval times. According to these interpretations the prophet Muhammad is a false prophet and the muslims are superstitious people. From 1000 - 1500 Islam was presented to ignorant people as a violent and intolerant religion. The spread of Islam was said to be the result of aggression on the part of Muslims. The rapid spreading of Islam in Asia, Africa and Southern Europe was considered a serious threat to Christianity. Christian monks spent ten to twenty years of their lives studying Islam to find the answers or proof that the message of Jesus was right and the message of Muhammad wrong. This attitude towards Muslims and Islam continued during the period of colonisation of countries such as Indonesia, India and Surinam.

One would expect or even assume that today, as a result of the increasing

communication between nations, the understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims must have improved. Sometimes this seems to be the case, but in the end it proves to be not lasting. Especially when certain incidents or social-economic problems occur. Mass media plays an important and often decisive role in establishing the opinion of people. In the case of the Muslims, this is not just a minority problem because it is obvious that the problems Muslims are facing today are more intense than the ones other minorities meet in this society. For example, the average Dutch citizen will tell you that he has nothing against the establishment of mosques or Islamic institutions in the Netherlands, but when the Muslim community is preparing to establish a mosque in his neighbourhood, he will try to prevent this. On the other hand, he will use all kinds of arguments to assure the Muslim community that this has nothing to do with discrimination. For the last ten years, many studies and surveys regarding Islam and Muslims have been made by scholars of Dutch institutions. I refer to studies of Dr. van Koningsveld and Dr. Shadid. Their reports give a realistic picture of the character of the Muslim population in the Netherlands. These reports show us that the majority of the Muslims living in this country are peaceful people who only want to perform their religious duties and to be accepted and respected by their fellow citizens. Nevertheless, it seems that these studies and surveys have little impact on the general attitude towards Muslims in the society. The average non-Muslim citizen seems to accept only the kind of information which confirms prejudices against Islam and Muslims.

THE ATTITUDE OF MUSLIMS AS A MINORITY LIVING IN THE NETHERLANDS

Being a Muslim myself, I admit that many of my brothers and sisters in Islam do not present themselves as members of the Dutch society or as members of another society they are living in, because they are still treated as foreigners. They are not actively involved in community centres. It is only a small number that participate in political parties. The result is that they are not interesting enough as voters to attract the attention of political parties in order to take special measures for Muslims. In fact,

we see today that some political parties are afraid to lose votes to the extreme right if they openly promise the Muslims special facilities. They rather use the neutral expression or qualification 'groups in an underprivileged position' instead of 'migrants' or 'foreigners'. To use the word Muslims is far too risky for them. They also fear the ghost of religious fundamentalism that seems to roam about. The newspapers, the television, the radio, the media in general are providing news about developments in the so called Islamic countries in such a way that the prejudices towards Islam and Muslims are confirmed every day, although they usually pretend to be objective.

For some members of the Muslim population it is difficult to feel at ease in the Dutch society. There are many reasons for this, but the main reason is that they are a minority which is under pressure all the time. Every day they are confronted with negative information in the media about Muslims. Developments in the Muslim countries are presented in such a way that the average reader could not but get a stereotypical view of Islam and Muslims. The articles from journalists who are trying to present Islam in a wider scope are more or less neglected.

Some Muslims in the Netherlands are more optimistic, although they do not feel at ease. They are trying to study and are willing to use the possibilities provided by the law to acquire facilities for their community. Nationality is not the main issue for them. They are more concerned with participation in this society, but without losing their religion.

The two mentioned attitudes in the Muslim population can partly be explained by Islam itself. Muslim scholars have throughout the centuries produced studies about conditions and circumstances under which Muslims can live and function in a non-Muslim state. We are dealing here with many different kinds of questions and opinions. Can one stay in a non-Muslim country for the purpose of work, study et cetera; is it permissible to settle down and adopt the nationality of a non-Muslim state? All these questions are going through the minds of the Muslim population because these opinions are still alive and discussed by them. Especially among the Muslims who came to this country from the so called Islamic countries.

These difficulties partly explain the hesitation of a number of Muslims to participate in Dutch society. Another explanation for this hesitation is the feeling of solidarity towards the mother country.

A general rematk which is based on a prophetic tradition and which is mentioned frequently by Muslims is, that they can live in a non-Muslim country when they are free to perform their relgious duties and are not being persecuted.

A VIEW OF THE FUTURE PROSPECTS OF ISLAM AND THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN THE NETHERLANDS

This is the major topic of my lecture because I am personally more intetested in the future of Islam and the Muslim minority in the Nethetlands. I am dealing with it everyday, in my work and in my daily life.

I experience this issue as exciring, sometimes as hopeful and at other times as hopeless. Dealing with this issue, we have to rake a few questions into consideration.

The first question is: can Islam achieve a place in the Netherlands which is acceptable for both Muslims and non-Muslims? And if so, how can we achieve this?

These questions cannot be answered without raking into account the different statements by political parties. The parties of the extreme right say that Islam cannot be practised in the Netherlands. The Muslims have to go home. But what about the Dutch Muslims? What about the second and third generation of the muslims who came here from abroad? Where should they go? Conservative parties mainly say that Western civilization cannot be combined with Islam. The Muslims have to adopt the Western way of life. Christian and Social Democratic parties emphasize the basic right of freedom of teligion fot evetyone. Some of them are even willing to cteate possibilities to use Islam as a vehicle for integration of Muslims in this society. However, the word 'integration' has many connotations. Assimilation is rejected by the Muslims.

I would rather not use the word integration but if I must use it, I would like to add to the meaning 'on an equal basis'. And this addition is by all means not achieved yet. The Dutch society or the political parties are at crossroads now. Do they open the door and accept Islam in the same way Ptotestantism or Catholicism is accepted or not? I think that the Dutch government has not yet made this decision. They assume an attitude of expectation. There is no action on their behalf. Muslim organisations have to go rhrough a lot of trouble before they can scote.

To be able to answer the question on behalf of the Muslims in an objective way, I have to take into consideration rhat we live in a secular country. The practice of one's religion is something personal. This means that religious communities can develop their own regulations. This is permitted and protected by the law as long as it is not in contradiction with the law itself. Family law can be practised to a certain extent within its own community. Christian and Jewish communities in the Netherlands do the same.

Summarizing, I would like to see the following things be realized. In the first place, Islam should be consideted as a reasonable and flexible religion in the Westetn Society. The frequent attitude of sarcastic temarks against Islam should be restrained. Secondly, Islam and Muslims in the Netherlands should be treated without discrimination by the different governmental organs and on higher political levels. And finally, nartow mindedness and ignorance should be replaced by open mindedness and ptopet infotmation.

Ibrahim Spalburg coordinates the Islamic Organisations in Rijnmond. He was one of the founders of the Federation of Muslim organisations in The Netherlands.

3

DISCUSSION WITH

Peter Pekelharing and Ibrahim Spalburg

> Ibrahim Spalburg:

I want to ask Pieter Pekelharing: What about the issue concerning the education of children in their own culture? Last year, we saw that the government wanted to change a few things, they said it was better for the children to learn Dutch. They are trying to change the attitude of the parents so that they will educate the children differently, in a more Western or suitable way, to enable them to work and to live here. You are very optimistic, I think.

> Pieter Pekelharing:

These things are very difficult. First of all what is needed, is a basic sense of trust, so that people of different cultures can trust each other. One way to achieve that kind of trust is realising that it is necessary to let people grow up in their own culture in their own language according to their own tradition. That has to be done as much as possible. They should have as much sovereignty as possible. The problem is, how far do you go? What standards do we have? And are the standards biased towards another culture? For instance, if the womens movement says that women of other cultures are not treated equally, that there is inequality between men and women in a specific culture, is this simply a Western standard to demand that equality? That is a kind of problem philosophers call relativism: can we explain when using standards, why and how these standards are not biased towards another culture? The standards I would be inclined to use are those of the liberal democratic state. These standards are that you maintain the option of trying to achieve as much equality for the other culture as possible, that you listen to protests of the womens movement and try to discuss things so that you get together. Yes, one culture should be able to live according to their own tradition but it should not be able to seclude itself. It should be a part of a larger discussion; it must be possible to criticise. The problem is, when we talk about the dominance of the West, very often you hear that critics are always people from the West and there is a kind of Western imperialism, that is the kind of discussion that comes up every time.

My approach is to think about the meaning of culture. You start thinking about cultures as integrated wholes, but we should think about cultures as things that are half way, always developing, and we should think there are people between cultures, they have their own cultures and if we try to think about cultures in that way, then we also realize that borders between cultures are very porous and that knowledge of other cultures is always part of that culture. So criticism for example is not always external criticism, because very often nowadays, women from other cultures know about the womens movement and discuss it themselves. So it is also a

criticism within that other culture. As you said in your lecture, we should take away ignorance. You must realize that knowledge about other cultures means the changing of their own culture. It might change so much that people leave their religion.

> Ibrahim Spalburg:

That is possible, you have to be open-minded. We cannot live in tribes anymore; we live in this society as a whole. We have to go out to look for knowledge. We can explain it also from our religion. You are separating religion from culture. For us, it is different. If we live in Holland we have to go out and meet people from other cultures, and of course our culture will change, but that is no problem because it can change. That is not a contradiction to Islam because Islam is the most important for us, it is the only thing people have to keep. When Islam came to Indonesia for instance, Islam did not change the culture of the people, only things that were in contradiction with Islam changed. There are still lots of cultural things in Indonesia which have nothing to do with Islam. I think it is the same in Holland. We can adopt Dutch culture and many things that are not contradictory to Islam. But I think that most people who are coming here are not thinking about becoming European citizens, they want to remain Turk, Moroccan or whatever they come from.

> Nenad Fiöer to Pieter Pekelharing:

You used the metaphor 'melting pot'. Can you be more specific about it? New York, if not America as a whole, has been called a melting pot. In what sense do you use this term for the Western world?

Pekelharing: My answer will not be conform with my lecture. I think when you go back to the idea of the melting pot and the way it was valued, it is important whether it was positively or negatively valued, if that is what you mean. The valuation has changed. Starting with the French Revolution there have been conservative critics of democracy. Nietzsche said democracy will be a melting pot; everybody will become the same. Everybody will eat cereal in the morning, everybody eats chinese food, watches the same operas, listens to the same music; it will become one great mass of people who are diverse but do not in their diversity identify themselves. So we get one sort of homogeneous culture. Democracy was criticised. Defenders of democracy tried to show that democracy was really a protector of diversity and that what democracy did was enable people to broaden the range of their choices, to choose from different cultures; they became more free because there would be more options. People could choose what reflected their own personality; not everybody makes the same choice, so democracy was defended as leading to diversity and creating some kind of individualism.

The problem at this moment is that suddenly governments have discovered this multicultural society, the importance of groups, but it is not really clear what the consequences of this discovery are. What it might mean is the acknowledgement of the importance of different groups and a large range of choices for individuals but it might end up in being able to adopt from other groups and eventually in the vanishing of cultures. So the remarkable thing is, that on the one hand there is this tendency to acknowledge multiculturalism, and on the other hand, what will happen is that if you do that under the conditions of a liberal democracy, it will simply mean that these individuals will acquire an identity of their own and they will not identify with one certain group but will become members of many groups, so these groups will disappear. Some people say: that is horrible, it leads to a melting pot in the most negative way. This is just a possible consequence.

> Nenad Fiöer:

What I am uncomfortable with is that we are only given two options. On the one hand we are speaking about preserving cultural identity but the mental imagery is that of mental compartments; on the other, we speak of a melting pot which is that of the melting into an amorphous mass. The original idea of a melting pot came from chemical tradition that you get an alloy which is different from each of the constitutional elements. I am coming from an environment where already four different compositions lived together for two centuries. The point I am uncomfortable about is the fact that very often this is completely neglected. There is no such thing as a bag in which you put the four different coloured balls together and then you mix them, and what you get is multi-ethnicity. Providing sufficient time, these four will refine

a new quality which cannot be traced back to any of the singular constituencies. So therefore there is an option in between, because in a social environment moments have to be created for communication between groups. The minute you have a communication, there is a feedback. None of the participants remains the same.

> Pieter Pekelharing:

That is what I meant. We have this great difficulty of thinking in groups. The minute we think of groups we close the borders, a kind of billiard ball concept.

> Franz Kaiser:

I cannot avoid, in trying to tackle this problem, to get a bit closer to the question of what culture is. I think to get out of this dilemma, it is important - although I may be accused of imperialism - to make the distinction of qualities between cultures or groups of cultures on one hand and what we call Western culture. The problem is that when you start this discussion, it immediately is a kind of moralistic judgement about what is better, what is more noble, but this is a false approach to the problem. The difference is that Western culture is based on assumptions which are directly derived from science, from abstract thought, from a rational organisation of society. There is a vacuum of spirituality. Democracy is organised according to rational laws and going back to the morals of the imperative 'I want you to behave towards me like I behave to you'. It is basically a rational way to organize a big community but the question of religion or spirituality is not included in it. So there are two different approaches; it is possible to integrate things in a rational way; we see it in our culture in the museums for instance, but as a culture we are not able to approach the spiritual, religious needs in our society. We see today that a globalisation of rational culture but also even in the Western world an increasing amount of movements trying to get in touch with spirituality. There is a vacuum which has to be dealt with.

> Pieter Pekelharing:

About this spiritual vacuum which is typical for the West. The only way I can explain that is the tendency to create a distinction between the public and the private. Religion is seen as someone's private preference. You believe because you get personal satisfaction out of it. But a true believer does not believe that he gets personal satisfaction out of it. He believes that his religion is true. It is not like sex, unless you make a religion out of sex of course. The idea that all this is reduced to personal preference leads to a spiritual vacuum. One way or another, we have to get back to the discussion about religion. It is possible to think that religion is developed for rational reasons, to discuss it in the public sphere and not reducing it to something for private satisfaction. At the same time, we need institutions that are not biassed towards religion. We have to find a new form of neutrality which makes it possible to understand that certain procedures are fair and can be accepted by everyone from different religions. It is a discussion about fairness and about something more than merely utilitarianism.

> Heinz Kimmerle:

A question for Ibrahim Spalburg. Although I know that fundamentalism in the Islamic groups in the West is not what the media wants us to think it is, I would like to know what is the real influence of fundamentalism in Islam now and what are the reasons for fundamentalism, where does it come from and what is the future prospect of fundamentalism?

> Ibrahim Spalburg:

I think that if the Dutch government, and the Western governments, give the Islamic people enough facilities, there will be no problem with fundamentalism. I believe that fundamentalism is created when people are not satisfied, take Iran and Algiers. The first followers of Islam were in a very difficult situation. They were slaves, poor and ill treated. Islam can give people self respect because in Islam all people are equal, that is one of the reasons why people are attracted to Islam. People like Louis Farrakhan and his black movement in America use Islam to condemn all other people, Jews, Christians et cetera, saying that God and Mohammed are black. They try to get self respect through Islam. What I want to say is that when Western governments do not take muslims seriously, when they want them to become like Western people, that maybe there will be problems. Unemployment and poverty can also mean a threat. When the people remain poor

under a Western modelled government, people might say: we are poor because we have abandoned Islam and now we are punished. In Holland there might be sympathy for fundamentalists in other countries, but only to help them with money and other means because they are in need.

> Heinz Kimmerle:
Fundamentalism is the counter force of multiculturalism. I agree that we have to fight the reasons of fundamentalism but perhaps we should also fight fundamentalism itself.

> Ibrahim Spalburg:
The majority of the muslims in the Netherlands are fighting fundamentalism. We have to accept the law of the country we are living in. Living in Holland, we cannot condemn Salman Rushdie, it is a crime to do that. Most of the muslim leaders have distanced from the Rushdie affaire. Only in a theocratic state is it possible to govern according to religious laws.

> Heinz Kimmerle:
Multiculturalism leads to self criticism. Did you experience that in the muslim community in Holland?

> Ibrahim Spalburg:
Yes, we do it all the time. To begin with, there are big differences between the muslims in the Netherlands. Many things have been changed, nobody marries four wives anymore.
We open the door to other cultures and do not think that we know everything better. We discuss and try to achieve certain goals for society.

> Pieter Pekelharing:
Fundamentalism is not a category exclusive for Islam not even for religion. In America people kill because they are against abortion. It also is not always related to poverty. Think of former Yugoslavia, there was no poverty. We have to think about fundamentalism. It has various kinds of causes. We have to be prepared for it all the time and indeed it is the antithesis of multiculturalism.

> Franz Kaiser:
Maybe fundamentalism is the antithesis to the rational society and the tendency of this society to refuse to deal with spiritual needs. What you suggested about establishing ministries for religious affairs, this is the way how a rational society deals with spiritual things. We have institutions for art, for all kinds of things. The problem of the irrational need of mankind is evacuated and modern society tends to that, and I think that could be a deeper reason for fundamentalism.

> Ibrahim Spalburg:
People see women covering their head as fundamentalism. Many a time this is a protest, a token of their own identity they are proud of. Also, the organisation of young people is seen as fundamentalism. In Holland there are no reasons for fundamentalism. We are a minority and even a strong divided minority.

4

MULTICULTURAL
MEDIA CULTURE

Jo Groebel

What I want to talk about tonight is communication. At the moment, an important discussion is going on concerning the developing electronic world. In this world with internet and internet news groups, people in different places communicate in a certain language, not necessarily sharing communication codes. They are forming new groups in another way. People used to form groups in a more or less geographical context. This is changing.

The overall topic is the dominance of Western culture. I like using the example of pop culture. If you look at pop-culture, you would probably come to the conclusion that Western dominance is not necessarily true for that area. If I look at pop music, it is hard to determine what the roots are. Apart from the language, which is still English - but exceptions are accepted even in the "hit parade" - it is not typical Western. There are so many influences that it is hard to say that there is a dominance of Western culture. My first conclusion is that it is not the content that counts, but the distribution. Looking at the media, communication systems as they are, I have come to the conclusion that in film, the dominance of Western, more specific American, culture is obvious. But in other areas, like music, it is not easy to say that they are Western dominated. The real dominance lies in distribution. This is even more important than the content of cultural products because those who control the distribution can control what is coming to people.

With regard to the electronic future I was talking about, a big fight is going on between two, three or maybe five, big companies which are trying to monopolize a world network. Internet at the moment is a rather democratic and free system. But this is changing. The same can be said about the electronic network of television. Those who have the most professional means and ways to reach people, will have a kind of monopoly. So the second conclusion is that speaking of dominance, the content is only accepted when it will offer a good financial profit. Paul Verhoeven, a Dutch film-director - however I doubt if he is typical Dutch - was accepted as soon as he offered something that made financial profit.

I would like to examen the question of identities in the electronic world. The point is that until now, when we have spoken of identity, we have a couple of social, psychological, philosophical, sociological explanations about how identities are formed. We all agree that this has to do with certain concepts people have of themselves, which are not inert and stable from the moment of birth, but developing all the time. Biological dispositions may to a certain extent already dispose someone to a certain identity, but there is also a certain amount of

freedom, the choices one makes, the education one gets to form one's identity. To be provocative, there has been research in ethnology and psychology about specific female identity. It was perceived as something primarily determined by education, but it turns out that female identity has also to do with some biological dispositions. For example, men appear to be more aggressive and also to accept more aggressive cues or communication codes than women. Nevertheless, identity is formed in a permanent interaction between those biological dispositions and the experiences people have. Identities are to a great extent formed by 'real' experiences with 'real' people we meet, with social comparison, education, and role models that are presented to us. However, one thing that comes up when speaking about cultural identity, is that there is an increasing freedom of choosing an identity. This is a major, basic philosophical question of the future.

Three hundred years ago, it was hardly possible to make a real choice, a real decision about the kind of identity one would obtain. This holds true for psychological identity, for cultural identity and for religious identity. People were born in a sociological context and some people were able to get to another social class, but most people could only move slightly away from their context. The developments of the last hundred years enabled people to learn more and more about the whole spectrum of identities, and a higher mobility made it possible to go to other places and to meet other people. And of course the whole political systems changed and a variety of identities became available. Today I am here, a German professor wearing a tie, but later tonight I might go out to a rock club and mix in a leather-dressed crowd and no one would care. The spectrum of possible identities has changed tremendously. Western people who went to Poona even tried to change their own culture.

One thing though still holds true and that is that when entering different groups, one has to make ones personality, ones identity transparent, it still is necessary to show a certain commitment at least for some time.

If we look at the electronic network, something strikes me, something that we have not dealt with before. Wandering around in the network, one enters a group that seems interesting, one accepts an identity which is not necessarily ones real identity. Being a man in real life, in the electronic network it is possible to be a woman. You can also change age, profession, religion and so on and behave according to the new chosen identity. The same holds of course for the cultural background; in the electronic world there are no borders anymore. Internet can be looked upon as a metaphor for a network society. In this society it is possible to enter a whole variety of societies within minutes and take over a whole variety of identities and no one will ask you to explain what you are doing there. So my next conclusion is that the question of identity and personality is at stake to a certain extent. At least the concept of identity in the classical sense of the word. Social control as a way of explaining one's behaviour is not necessary anymore. Although I do not want to draw a pessimistic picture, talking in terms of cultures we will face a dramatic change. Even every day life, like going to work, having leisure time activities, meeting people, which is now highly dependant on a geographic context, are changing. There will be a situation where most of the day can be spent in the electronic system, wandering through a lot of different cultures. This kind of living can develop into a new culture. In the concept of culture as we know it and have discussed it, with its problems with geographical borders, social codes et cetera, a new dimension has emerged. In the electronic world, communication codes might be important, but commitment is no longer necessary. Up till now it was hard to enter a culture, the choice to be part of a culture or group demanded commitment.

If I look a bit further, the dimensions of the new electronic media are as follows. The first thing is the speed and the limits of the communication equipment. Up till now we have approached the media culture in terms of dominance of specific media. The period of the press which is still going on, was followed by the period of film and later television and now it is the time of computers. These periods of dominating media come to an end and instead of it we will have so called open systems. One of the consequences of these open systems is that if you do not have a system that is used by the majority of the people, you no longer share the same cultural codes. In the television dominated period which we more or less still

live in, people watch the same soaps, the same news programs, the same music. There are certain common cultural codes. The development of open systems of the media will lead to a more and more fragmented use of communication systems; less people will share the same codes, apart from big events like sports events. This developing open systems where all kinds of machines are used at the same time is already at hand in the international market. Eventually it will mean that the idea that we are determined or dominated by television culture will change.

The second dimension has much to do with the change of cultural identity. There is an additional possibility to create virtual realities, simulations of the real reality but also offer the possibility to enter a hyper-real world. What do I mean by that? I do not know if you are familiar with virtual reality, a technique by which you can enter a three dimensional digital space electronically, which is so perfect that it is impossible to distinguish between real reality and virtual reality. One does not only enter simulations or representations of reality, but it is also possible to computer-generate realities and even to enter your own body with an endoscope which might create a new way to approach our own body. With these new techniques you do not only create a new open system, but also a new spectrum of so many different worlds and cultures and cultural codes that it is hardly possible to make a clear distinction between one culture and another.

The third dimension is the necessity to integrate in these cultures emerging through the explosion of additional possibilities of the media. The possibility to enter so many different information- sources creates a complete freedom of choices and compositions. The problem is: who makes the choices? All information available to everyone means the impossibility to make choices at all. All the written information available on online or CD-rom is to be found on menus. Here, a new problem of domination emerges. New kinds of information-agents and opinion leaders will enter the field and make choices for you. Will they be Western or not? I am afraid that there will be a higher Western domination than ever.

The fourth dimension I call 'virtual group formation'. The electronic world leads to new groups no longer depending on

geragraphic definition.

As a member of a so called virtual group, you do not know whether the people you are attracted to actually have the specific identity you think they have. The problem arises that you do not know whether it is a real or a virtual reality. The first cases are known of people falling in love with someone through Internet. When it came to a real appointment, it turned out that the other person did not exist or was a twelve year old boy instead of the female he had pretended to be. The question of commitment, personal commitment and cultural commitment is at stake here.

The final thing is the end of the era of mass-communication. Maybe the domination of culture as we know it, depends on what comes to us through the mass media. Domination means that many people on the globe share the same communication codes. They watch the same soaps like the Cosby Show and take over the lifestyle of the Cosby family. The Cosby Show is a perfect example of how a certain personality can be used to cover at the same time 'black culture'. But the Cosby Show of course is nothing but a typical white male middle class kind of culture. When we look at the statistics, it is clear that the Cosby family is absolutely not representing the average black family in the United States. These common cultural codes are coming to an end with the open systems. The users get more and more possibilities to tailor their communication means around a very specific electronic world.
The consequences are that we cannot speak of a Western dominance anymore. Instead, in about ten years time the world will not be a 'global village'. There will be so many small and different villages that the concept of a common global culture is no longer valid.

What we also have to discuss is the belief that more information automatically means more rationality. I think it can also lead to irrationality. People think they are lead by rational motives because they are so well informed, but in fact their motives are irrational.

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⑤

WEST, NON-WEST
AND THE DEMOCRATION LINE

Nenad Fiser

Over periods of 10.000 years the distinctions between Western, Eastern and African cultures lose all meaning. Over a time span of a 100.000 years we are all Africans. And over a time span of 300 million years we are all amphibians, waddling uncertainly out of dried-up ponds onto the alien and hostile land. [Freeman Dyson]

Since the time Max Weber reached for the deeper strata of culture (religion and its ethical structure) in order to elucidate the origins and preconditions of capitalism, it should not come as a surprise that some prominent features and processes of reality can be fruitfully analyzed in terms of the most abstract ideas. They provide a frame not only for material connections (as exemplified in recognizing capitalism as an extension and a consequence of technological applications initiated by the invention of the steam machine), but also for basic driving forces within a value system that shapes the lifestyle of a particular social community.

The issue we are to deal with faces various obstacles: inappropriate categorization, ahistoricity, faulty reduction, interpretative circularity, or simply uncritically accepted stereotypes of non-

Western cultures in general, and of their philosophical quintessence in particular.

My intention is to start from the assumptions concerning 'The dominance of the western culture'. The statement implies that in the totality of different world views, cultures and lifestyles, there is a segment which is named the 'Western culture', dominating the others. This model can quite accurately be rephrased in 'us' and 'them' terms, where the borderline is established through some chosen differentia specifica. In order to determine it better, we can follow two different approaches. One is to remain on the level of phenomenological appearances, describing two domains in relevant details, pointing out differences and evaluating (somewhat arbitrarily) their significance.

The other approach would be to look for some formative, underlying factor, and to investigate its status and content in ideospheres we are to compare. Sometimes, this pivotal point of comparison is found in the deepest layers of a particular structure, articulated through abstract terms as E. M. Meletinski does in his 'Poetics of the Myth' saying: 'Greek mythology is deeply symbolic,

Indian is mostly allegoric, and Persian schematic'.

Participating in the seminar dedicated to the issue of the dominance of the western culture, I presume that we are all aware of a quagmire one enters if assuming a hardcore reductionistic position. Nevertheless, it seems that the very subject we are to deal with, forces us in some sort of reduction, both in terms of 'dominance' and of 'Western culture'.

Here we find an undefined determinant of what is dominated by the Western culture. We are left to suppose whether the counterpart of 'Western culture' is 'non Western culture' (which would, presumably, encompass most of the globe save Western Europe and North America), or it is 'Eastern culture', which is, albeit fuzzy, still a narrower determination. In both cases, we lack the criterion on the basis of which we are to establish this counter position, and moreover what is implied by this established difference? Is it focused on values and social norms, i.e. lifestyles producing them, or on the character of capital production, or does it capture some deeper formative principles that can be traced along the vertical of various layers and domains of a certain world view? Furthermore, are these opposites mutually exclusive (antithetic), are they simple contraries, maybe even the complements, or do they represent just different positions within a single continuum? Is there any feedback between them and what kind of effects it produces? In short, we are caught in a tacit assumption of what makes 'us' and 'them', and what is the relation between these two domains.

US, THEM AND INBETWEENS

There are two major questions in front of us. The first has to do with a nature and an extent of the assumed differences, much in the sense of Paul Deussen's remark that 'the comparative method has a value only if focusing on differences and not similarities'. The second deals with the very nature of that questioning. That inquiry involves a permanent reevaluation of our concept of 'Otherness'.

I believe that this kind of investigation constitutes an Organon of culture, in the same sense as the comparative philosophy

itself does.

The fact that certain models of perceiving and comprehending the reality develop in a prominent feature of some cultures, by no means implies that these paradigms form a unique achievement of, or exclusively belong to, that particular culture. To illustrate this better let us recall that despite the ahistorical stereotype according to which the occidental culture is basically rationalistic while the oriental is not, there is no major philosophical development found throughout the history of Western civilization that couldn't be matched with its proper Eastern equivalent. Moreover, in numerous cases, the initial impetus of some later dominant developmental line within one cultural tradition, was delivered from another culture. But still, the question remains open: how come in its initial, original environment that idea never 'caught up', never produced such dramatic effects as it did when embraced in its new cultural surroundings? Twenty years ago, in 'The Selfish Gene', Richard Dawkins introduced his concept of memes idea blueprints which inhabit our world alongside all the fauna and flora. Memes form a pool of contingencies comparable to the pool of genetic resources which accounted for the development of all prehuman species. The evolutionary boost of human kind, in an exceptionally short period of time, according to this view, is to be understood primarily as a result of the existence of the memes.

As genes, they are replicators, which reproduce themselves with reliability and fecundity, playing their role according to the basic principles of the evolutionary game: variation, heredity and differential fitness. Paraphrasing Daniel Dennett, all memes have the property of having such a form (phenotypic expressions) that tends to make their own replication more likely. And how do they do it? By disabling or preempting the environmental forces that would tend to extinguish them. Just like in the case of genes, the meme's 'life-expectancy' depends on its ability to fit in with other memes it encounters on their mutual compatibility.

Ideas in the meme pool arise and propagate spreading from brain to brain, from culture to culture, or die out depending on interactions between their features and features of the environment in which they persist. Memes spread through meme vehicles

such as pictures, books, sayings, tools, buildings, inventions practically anything which embodies a certain idea.

It is tempting to assume that there is such a meme, or idea, the difference of whose content in two cultures could account for the consequent 'Us and Them' distinctions.

Of course, this is definitively a reductionist's approach, so let me immediately consent that it is by no means a search for an 'immovable mover', for a single source or explanatory factor. Rather, for a significant or unjustifiably neglected one.

Frequently, we encounter a kind of 'reverse engineering' approach, tracing history backwards in search for some 'bifurcation point', after which two simultaneous and previously similar processes of development of 'us' and development of 'them' clearly took a different course. My temporal determinants will be in that sense quite vague, as a precaution against confusing precipitating factors for formative ones. Let me illustrate my point.

It is certainly an attractive idea to capture some assumed 'turning points' in the history. Often the period between 1300 and 1350 is taken as such, marked by the Black Plague of 1348-1350.

It was further connected with the decline of 'contemptus mundi', the increasingly common use of money, the gradual transition from a gregarious to a more individualistic existence, and finally to the shift that occurred in the focus of European development (which moved from northern France to Italy primarily, but also to Spain and northern Germany). But, by rule, in pinpointing dramatic historical events, we easily end up with noting outstanding processes that merely released a transformational force of new qualities. And these were silently and persistently accumulated before, within the existing environment. Sometimes, their influence on transformation of that environment is rather gradual, sometimes exceptionally dynamic.

Let us examine an example illustrative enough for our point about the memic interdependency.

One of the most prominent features of what is nowadays called the 'Western cultural circle' is, justifiably so, its mobility. It dominated historical processes that eventually led to contemporary 'trademarks'

of the Western world. Whether, and in which sense, this mobility is such a distinctive feature of ours when compared to some other cultures, is beside the point. What should be noted, however, is the belief that an innate, culturally reinforced disposition for exploration and travel when combined with motivational impetus provided by developing trade, was all it took for Western culture to spread out its dominating might. But, how we did it is mostly left unanswered, or dismissed as a mere technicality, although it actually reveals a telltale history. It required more than venturing spirits, in effect the generous contributions of other minds and other cultures were the ones who made it possible. For the ocean bottoms and unknown lands were covered with bones of those who did have a motive and guts to dare, but missed the necessary 'knowhow' to survive and tell their story. To do so required knowledge and numerous skills often unavailable in the immediate vicinity when most needed.

The knowledge of cartography was certainly the most indispensable. And that skill, as it were, was conditioned by putting in motion numerous astronomical and mathematical tools and ideas. The mapping of oikumene, or 'known world' as the stoic philosopher Posidonius (1st century B.C.) called it, is an excellent example of the cooperation of very different memes directed towards a certain result of human practice.

The escalation of cartographic needs triggered or influenced a new focusing of already existing knowledge, and even more so, often initiated the creation of a new one in the process. In a shift of pragmatic need, cartography developed from the OT maps (which served mainly a decorative purpose mixing geographical fantasies in accordance with theological prescripts, and lasted all the way into the 15th century), towards the maps that could be reliably used. These were developed from the portolanos of mariners, who certainly learnt the hard way how to distinguish between 'evolutionary fitness' and 'political correctness'.

The need for accurate maps embraced the ideas of those who were not burdened by the 'ideological value content' of their knowledge. And they had no other choice but to be impartial in respect to its origin. The knowledge that could effectively cope with the challenges of reality was too scarce and too valuable. It took a lot of mediators to get into a position of choosing between

maps that had Jerusalem in the centre of the Earth, oriented with the East at the top and Catalan ot Maggiolo's portolanos with their accurate loxodromes as guidelines.

The recognition of substantially different ideas came in place of previously unquestioned authorities. The explanation of the world as given by St. Isidore of Seville, or one of the Alexandrian Cosmas Indicopleustes from the 6th century, definitely lost their place in the reign of 'mundane practicalities'. In the most marvellous way, which only human epistemic hunger can produce, 'the time had come' for seemingly disconnected ideas and domains of the scientific quest to merge into a larger frame of understanding. Within that frame, a centuries older Alexandrian, Claudius Ptolemaeus (2nd century), became a contemporary of AlIdrisi, his Arab 'brother in world view'. AlIdrisi himself fused elements from East and West with Arab knowledge to produce the famous Mappa Mundi in 1154 for the Norman king of Sicily, Roger II. Only with such ancestors, and with the help of ingenious tools and inventions, the developmental line of synthesized knowledge could lead to Gerhard Kremer or 'Mercator' in the 16th centuty, and to what we recognize nowadays as modern cartography. However, even a superficial glance on this 'family three of minds' will reveal a lack of another distinguished cousin, whose mediation was insttumental in all family dealings - AlKhwarizim, better known as Algorithmus. His works on algebra were known in Spain since the 10th century and translated into Latin in the 12th. However, his mathematical insights were made possible through both Babylonian heritage and the IndoArabic decimal positional numeric system, devised by elders who were already then long forgotten. These 'strange' numerals were brought to Europe from Arabia, by Leonardo of Pisa (known as 'Fibonnacci'), only by the year 1200. The ciphers which we use so comfortably today, entered in an extensive manner in our cultute only in the 15th and 16th centuries. The Figurae Indorum, explained by Fibonnacci in 'Liber Abaci', were even officially forbidden in Florence in 1299, but nevertheless only a century later they were already used in all trade books of the Medici family. We tend to forget that the calculative power released through the application of this ingenious device, made

the books on algebra the second most published genre (after the Holy scripture) in the first centuries following Gutenberg's invention.

All these theories, ideas, and concepts that finally resulted in the skill of accutately representing the planetary surface on a map, clearly illustrate the case of memic interdependency. Their congruence indicates significant common ground. In this case this should not come as a surprise, having in mind that formal properties of mathematical or geometrical space are tested by human experience which is basically invariant even for the most diverse cultures. But, when time is concerned, we enter a very different domain. In contrast to the memes of Space, the memes of Time are shaped by very different circumstances. Except through basic astronomical cycles, which determine our circadian rhythm, time remained an everevasive concept. And in the adventure of mapping the world, Western civilization contributed with its own original achievement an accurate timekeeping device. Only with the help of such an invention, measurements of the longitude were made possible, after which accurate mappa mundi became reality. The preciseness required in measuring elapsed time, for that nautical purpose, was inconceivable from the existing experience of time. However, that expetience was shaped in an environment where time had already been subjected to particular attention, if not
scrutiny. In that respect, the meme of time, as shaped in its Western habitat, exhibits some specific features compated to the meme of time in certain other cultures. And dealing with time involves the most profound layers of any particular understanding of reality. Thetefote, examining the content of the time meme should help understanding reality as created under its influence. In othet words, what makes Westetn civilization so transparently different from nonWestern should be present already in their respective notions of time.

COMMODITY OF TIME

Our understanding of time, and particularly the influence of that understanding on the shape of the present day Western culture, was a subject of numerous fruitful studies. Here, I will try to outline some main directions of undertaken

investigations. The task is not an easy one because our reception of time is so firmly imbedded into the foundations of ideas that we already have about reality. It penetrates almost every concept we use.

The need for accurate measurement of time by artificial means was a relatively new phenomenon in human history. Millennia had passed during which the regularity of the astronomical cycles was sufficient for human temporal orientation: 30 days between full moons, 12 notches on the stick marking full moons between repeated seasons that comprised a year. Our predecessors were by all means very perceptive observers, as witnessed by numerous archaeological sites closely related to astronomical phenomena. It were Babylonians who made that big mental leap between dividing a year in 360 days, and dividing a circle into 360 degrees. As Bruton nicely explains:

'Days are discrete events; one is separated from the next by a period of darkness. The same is true of months and years. But to divide a day into hours or a circle into degrees involves the making of an artificial scale, because there is no natural division between hours or degrees.'

By that mental leap, time had finally found its geometric expression, moreover it became subjectable to analysis. From a practical point of view, those early, natural timekeeping devices served the purpose of basic social coordination and organization. Social life requires coordination among individuals - and that coordination is provided by synchronizing tools as watches are.

Calendar and watch provided the rhythmical beat to social activity. Relatively the latest calendar unit the week established durational boundaries of two successive market days. Although taken nowadays for granted to comprise seven days, in different cultures a week ranged from three to ten days.

A shorter week period indicated a simpler economy of primitive life.

That tells about the activity of time measurement, but how the nature of time was understood is a question of a very different kind. Early cultures ...had made little or no distinction between past, present, and future, preferring to experience reality as an everrecurring state of existence. The cyclical sense of time mirrored the ecological

and astronomical cycles, bonding human consiousness and culture to the rhythms of nature, as Jeremy Rifkind remarks in 'Time Wars'.

The development of Jewish religion released that convoluted presentation of time by helping to create the concept of history, which Rifkind justifiably qualifies as '...one of the greatest advances in human consciousness since the beginning of time'. Time became an irreversible plane in which specific and nonrecurring events took place, affecting all things to come. Introduction of the linear time frame of history initiated the process of separating human consciousness and culture from the periodicities of the natural world, creating the context for an everwidening chasm between social time and environmental time in the centuries to come as, again, Rifkind tells us. The time became conceptualized in a manner that would eventually lead to the modern understanding of time as abstract, external, linear, and quantitative.

The universe predesigned by supreme intelligence had no other way of functioning but by predetermined principles. Since they are the result of the Creator's choice, and therefore imposed upon reality, they are to be comprehended as 'natural laws' - in the same analogical sense as the laws made by man are enforced within the reign of his competences. The close connection between 'unnatural' and 'blasphemous' originated at this point. Therefore, 'natural laws' were fragmentary readings from the Creator's manual of world design (with a modest hope that the role of the reader is also properly described somewhere within the scripture).

The new comprehension of time was probably nowhere before so transparent as in the order of St. Benedict, formed in the 6th century. By then, time was already at large something that is required and used in the course of fulfilling man's purpose, dividing tasks by hours. 'Idleness is the enemy of the soul', was a cardinal rule of St. Benedict. It took about one millennium of social transformations until that viewpoint got the form of 'Idleness is the enemy of profit' - as contained in Franlins maxim 'Time is money'. By then, time became irrevocably secularized, despite a fierce clash between the Church's and merchants' understanding of it. The idea of linear time which originated in the structure of occidental monotheistic religions assumed that time is God's property

and therefore could not be rented or sold. That directly undermined the practice of profit making through interest contained in money lending. The idea of everprogressing time development that constitutes history, imposed a new sequential and durational behaviour, a new time orientation in which past, present and future received very different treatment. The clock finally dissociated time from human events and further the human events from the Nature itself.

In the scheduling cultures the temporal domain of past is merely prologue to the future. What counts is not what was done yesterday, but what can be accomplished tomorrow. Rifkind traced the developmental line of new temporal orientation all the way from the advent of efficiency which started by the division of labour in 1703 by, who else but a master clockmaker, Thomas Tompion. This led to the formulation of mass production principles in 1799 by Eli Whitney, principles which would later become known as the 'American Method'. This method was based on mass production of standardized, interchangeable parts that could be easily assembled by unskilled workers. Sure enough, the method was first applied in the watch industry. A century later Frederick W. Taylor's 'scientific management' in 1895 performed a final and decisive leap from the division of labour into the division of time itself.

Temporal imperialism of the modern age was definitively announced by the 1884 and 1912 International Meridian Conferences when a universal world time-reckoning system was established which made the name of Greenwich immortal. From this point on, until the modern cult of nano-technologies, the Chomskian institutional analysis proves to be a remarkable guide.

CYCLIC TIME DIRECTION

After this digression in the history of modern occidental concept of time and the lifestyle it helped to establish, we are obliged to elaborate a bit on its counterpart. If the former was defined as linear and quantitative, then the later would be expected to be nonlinear, comprehended in less quantitative but more qualitative terms. Chinese culture seems to be most suitable to serve as an appropriate point of reference. There we encounter a culture shaped under the influence of three great religions: Taoism,

Confucianism and Buddhism, all of them sharing the idea of a cyclic time frame. The history manifested itself in analogy with longitudinal astronomic movements. Lifestyle was not determined by the measure of time, but by experiencing its content. Instead of a thread of time unwinding in a certain direction, time was understood as a medium within which certain repetitive patterns occur. While in the occidental value system the power of anticipation was used as a 'navigational means' in process of future shaping, in Chinese culture it served for shaping the present, in order to meet the unavoidable future most appropriately. Guidance in that respect was offered by already established solutions from the past. Precedent and tradition ruled China for millennia, with a strength incomparable with any other culture. According to Robert Lauer '...intellectual controversies were waged on the basis of conformity or deviation from the past, which had unques-tionable authority'. From the occidental point of view, the low dynamics produced by such a temporal orientation leads to stagnation. From the Chinese point of view there is nothing in history in reference to which one would stagnate. Instead, the accent was put on stability. The fundamental difference, therefore, could be found in the magnitude of a socially desirable measure of entropy. Although meticulous in their calendar, astronomical observations or imperial archives, the purpose of these achievements was always past oriented. Naturally, they were intended for future use, but as a point of reference for better recognition of patterns that already took place once before.

The example of Japanese culture serves as good justification of my earlier cautiousness in East-West labelling. The Japanese idea of reality was not so much founded on a model of everrepeating celestial movements, but instead stressed its linearity and impermanence. Both Shinto and Zen made Japanese culture very receptive to the idea of change, which led to a rather instrumental treatment of time. The future was understood as a temporal domain where the values of past ascend to their best. During the 17th and 18th centuries time was recognized in Japan as a precious resource which is to be used wisely and efficiently. Robert Bellah finds the value system of this period (Tokugawa era) as the Oriental pendant of the 'Protestant ethics' of the West.

Writing about Chinese philosophy, Needham observes that the concept of natural law, dominating occidental thought, never occurred in China because the Chinese never developed, in a philosophically relevant sense, this idea of cosmic harmony as a logical consequence of God's will in the act of creation of the universe. Therefore, the development of the world is not a temporal project of fulfilment of teleological causa finalis, but is more within the frame of emergent evolution, of inherent immanence. That viewpoint tends to perceive the reality as a continuous field of balanced interdependences rather than that of discrete, separate units.

It is close to a non-dualistic ontology (as actually found in teachings of Vedanta, Madhyamaka, or Taoism), focused on a reflection which synthesizes totality (finding its best expression in oriental art), instead of the analytic reflection, so characteristic for traditional occidental science. The keywords of their domains being harmony and hierarchy, respectively.

There are, naturally, other conceptual pairs through which we could perform other kinds of differential analysis of 'West' and 'nonWest'. Some of these pairs can be located as even more abstract, and more revealing than the pair of linear and cyclical time orientations. Let us note the counterposition of an entitative and an aspectual paradigm.

The occidental mechanicity (derived into the adjective 'mechanistic', through a simplified mental imagery of billiard balls and forces of Newtonian dynamics) is closely related to the ontology which is articulated in terms of entities. The world is understood in terms of 'building blocks' and their relations, of conflicting polarities whose coexistence can be comprehended only by the ultimate disassembly of observed phenomena, and their respective mental mapping.

As opposed to this entitative paradigm, one can find another model, more emphatically pronounced in the history of oriental cultures, which quite appropriately might be called an 'aspectual paradigm'. The issue of mechanics within such a paradigm is not a matter of recently fashionable new age pseudo mystical cocktails of frontedge science and oriental philosophy. It focuses on the relation between perception of reality and the shapes (limits) of theories derived from it.

Staal finds an oriental epistemological counterpart of Euclides in the great Sanskrit grammarian Panini, distinguishing between their respective geometric and linguistic approaches; one being able to comprehend the wholeness in its complexity by prior analysis of its more elementary components, and the other in which discrete units are recognized only after their totality was properly comprehended. This issue goes further than the mere (and often artificial) distinguishing between reductionistic and holistic views. Schematic and sketchy as they are, these two determinants do provide some important insights. At least, they help us to identify the proper Western mental background on which the issue of 'Us' and 'Them', as two separate collective entities, is laid. Despite the fact that I tried to observe this subject in a very formal way, there is undoubtedly a political dimension of the subject we are discussing today. So let me finish by saying something in that respect.

BEYOND THE DIFFERENCES OF TIME ORIENTATION

Since the times of Aristotle, politics was understood as a rational way of structuring social reality. The forms in which that reality was organized changed along with the ripening of civilisation. The unsuccessful ones merely left the historical stage. The remaining ones however have to constantly improve in order to survive. The set of necessary and sufficient values for winning that evolutionary competition is getting better and better defined. That definition includes the description of mechanisms which will ensure a proper measure of order and chaos, which we already labelled as 'the optimal degree of entropy'. This measure has to satisfy both a certain degree of 'law and order' (categories too easily despised for so different, mostly historical, reasons) which is to maintain a selfsustaining social structure, and a certain degree of disorder needed to ensure its inner dynamism.

It is our knowledge about what is comparatively bad which promotes better solutions. From the necessity to capture salient features of the environment, which marked the beginnings of organic evolution, to the complex structures the of human world, we witness a steady development of the capability to reframe, to comprehend larger units of reality and their interconnectedness, and finally to 'advance

beyond yesterday's limits'.

The idea of an unchangeable, intrinsic 'human nature', firmly established in every social community, nowadays can be used only in a conversational manner, since it offers poor basis for more serious theoretical dialogue (in the line of Richard Rorty's recent antifoundationalism). Civilization is a selfmodifying totality where advantageous solutions push out the insufficient ones from the historical scene.

Long ago we might have determined our cosmic habitat on the basis of olfactory recognition, sharing the smell of the same cave with those who we take to be our kin. It was a sufficient frame considering the size and the features of the known world. The tribal horizon was a huge leap forward compared to the world of small, scattered families. In the course of past millennia, our ideas had to adopt to deal with extensions of reality which would include the entities of nations, racial and ethnic groups, different cultures, languages, symbols, codes of behaviour and communication... Only yesterday, a major civilizational cataclysm on the opposite side of the globe would pass virtually unnoticed. Today, even the slightest hint of an unpredicted or uncustomary change on the 'event horizon', would be known instantaneously all over the world, followed by a possible havoc on the stock market, closed government sessions, or deliberate ignorance.

Regardless of how we value it, the issue of today's globalizing of civilization is not something which can be seriously debated. It is a fact of reality, in the same sense as atmospheric motion of air masses or gravity itself are. You don't call for debate to decide what will be the value of number p, or on which decimal position it should end. Of course, you could do it, as a result of the free will of a political subject, but this freedom will be paid dearly by giving up on science and engineering in general, after which our hasty political subject will be left with very few elements he could exercise his free will upon.

Globalized culture doesn't exist in the environment of quantum leaps. Maybe there are sudden, revolutionary changes when observed from the standpoint of a cosmic chronometer, but they would hardly be called 'revolution' by tens of generations who were its combatants. Since every political system, by the very definition of the subject of the

politics, always boils down to the issue of culture, one should keep a reasonable scepticism towards the effectiveness of so called political i.e. cultural revolutions per se.

The common pool of different experiences of reality is the main asset of globalized culture. By saying so, we don't imply that field theory or quantum mechanics were developed by scientists who were familiar with what we just called 'aspectual paradigm'. It is more of 'the other way around' just as Panini's works on Sanskrit grammar became widely known only after the major job of contemporary linguistic revolution of Noam Chomsky was done. However, crosscultural communications of that kind serve as the major 'intuition pump' for any further investigations.

If politics is understood in terms of 'rational structuring of social reality', one assumes that this 'rationality' involves at least two distinct components: the capability to perceive reality and to draw adequate conclusions as a basis for further actions. How rigid are the rules of the evolutionary game in this arena? It seems that the evolution does provide a sufficiently large margin of error tolerance, when ''rationality' is involved. We can get away with some wrong deductions, even with some insane 'partem pro toto' fallacies if corrected on time (and usually, false conclusions stick out very visibly soon enough). But, there is much less of forgiveness when the issue of 'perceiving reality' is at stake. You can believe whatever you fancy about gravity, but if you try to fit your attitude into the overall contingency of the world you live in, things become dramatically different. Despite the decision of your free will (free to form its beliefs as it pleases), by a single step from the top of the nearest skyscraper you can witness in a very unpleasant way that some parts of reality are hard to dispute. Or sit in an airplane and fly wherever you want, because, despite the fact that you probably know about gravity as much as about aerodynamics (which is to say next to nothing), in assenting to that contingency evolution gave you a pass. If the world would consist of airplane flyers and skyscraper jumpers, the former would soon be the only remaining inhabitants of this world. The latter could try their convictions in some other world.

The perspectives of our overall civilization, globalized as it is, depend on how equipped we are to perceive and understand reality. Since we don't have organs for global perception, the closest we came to it was the idea of transnational or supranational institutions. Not as a 'Council of Wise Men' (for that would be a very unrealistic assumption), but as a necessary quantity able to articulate the median line of existing political philosophy if not as a result of the same level of political consciousness, then as a result of statistical averages. The main civilizational achievement of that historical moment is that mankind finally culturally absorbed a fact known for centuries by astronomers that Earth is a planet in space. A single, extremely complex unit of intricate interconnections. This awareness is primarily a cultural achievement, but consequently it is political as well. It is a step further in the process of mental reframing. It is not an issue of trendy holism, but of a fuller realization of the necessity to apply or develop different paradigms in reflecting human reality; those which would be able to cross over the gap between proper thinking and proper doing (orthodoxia and orthopraxies), between entitative scrutiny and aspectual survey. Abandoning the worn out models does not only open the space for better ones. It helps to learn about the dangers of imposing the status of 'naturalness' to our own 'working draft of reality', while disregarding the specific circumstances of its origin. Only in the light of that relativity it becomes clearer that no 'sacrosanct truth' is such that it couldn't use some further improvement. And in some critical cases, the capability to grasp the everchanging nature and to foresee its developmental line is what might eventually determine whether the human species would prolong its status as resident in this world.

Nenad Fiser is a philosopher from Sarajewo.

6

DISCUSSION WITH

Jo Groebel and Nenad Fiser

> Nenad Fiser:

About the lecture of professor Groebel: You said that we are dealing with two realities, an objective reality and within it a new emerging virtual reality. Both of these realities have a certain time determiner which influences behaviour, the rational and sequential behaviour. It is quite different in an environment of virtual reality and in an environment of objective reality. Do you see the potential danger of diminishing the capability of interaction between people within objective reality on account of adopting more the rational and sequential behaviour of the virtual reality?

> Jo Groebel:

Seeing a danger depends on axioms and value systems. An axiom concerns my belief in an objective reality. You can see that we deal with the two realities already. When we go to a film we see scenes that are not continuous but in our minds we have the experience of a continuous time. This is because of the capability to abstract. This capability is not automatically there. Young children are not able to make such a transfer or inference between two scenes. The movie also has to be sort of contextual. Talking about virtual reality or media that we already are used to, for instance a news program about Bosnia, what we see is that ten years ago the average scene about a news event was at least twenty seconds. Nowadays the average length of the scenes takes three seconds. Is this dramatic? Lots of people say you will get used to it. For me as a psychologist, I believe that it takes a certain time to identify a human being. In a video clip the scenes with human beings or bodies in it, are about two seconds, you hardly have time to identify a person. Only when scenes take twenty seconds can you identify a face, a certain personality. When you put together individual scenes not long enough for making an inference, what you get is - and I would just to be provocative say - a dramatic change of dealing with stories and in the end also expectations of dealing with other people. What we see is the average person uses television not for storytelling - stories with a beginning and a climax at the end - but as a kind of arousal machine.

When we look at virtual reality, we see it not as stories about people living together, but we use scenes as arousal, providers of individual stimuli. The transfer to dealing with each other is - I am not a cultural pessimist - that there are consequences for the expectations of people from each other. Expectations about how valuable a life is. There are no stories about other people, other cultures, only stimuli for individual arousal.

> Nenad Fiser:

When you mention film and television, that is not what I meant. Film and television are for entertainment and to get aroused. We are more or less adrenaline addicts. I spoke of acceleration of time in human interaction, you do not interact with a film. I know you just develop a new skill for understanding and interpreting information but we are speaking of virtual reality. This happens in electronic media, it offers completely different time frames and we do not have any kind of experience in that respect for the last 300.000 years. Is research done about people who deal on a daily basis with computer war? Acceleration of time follows nicely the pattern of the needs of a big industry. In 1927 the recommended period for mourning after the death of a beloved person was three years, in 1950 it was six months, in 1972 it was one week. That also changes the funeral practice. Burial is not as popular as cremation. Not only because of some cultural shift but also because it is easier and faster and does not require regular visits and care for the grave. So we do have a large industry that works in the direction of accelerating time frames. So how does that effect the capability to interact?

> Jo Groebel:

I used the example of film to illustrate that in existing technology we already have that acceleration. There have been experiments with heavy and low viewers to measure behaviour patterns and they tell us that people who watch film and television all the time, have a dramatically different estimate of time and patience with other people. For me it is not an either or question, it is a continuum and there is a hypothesis that there will be a gap between what is biologically demanded and what is technologically demanded. Talking about needs of arousal, experiments on sensational needs show that there is a danger of addiction. This means a change in the patterns of relationships. It is interesting to see that our biological means are not up to all the technological developments.

> Awee Prins:

Is the discrepancy between our evolutionary speed or rhythm and technological rhythm something that we talk about and our children will laugh about? You were talking about the molding of time experience, but did not talk about the challenge that we might have, is there a one way street or do you have a prophesy that we could deal with time in different ways? Will not technology force us to adapt to the acceleration of time or are there other options available?

> Nenad Fiser:

I am a fan of the technological possibilities of the time I live in, I am however aware of the fact that the multitude of information can increase rationality as well as irrationality. What we are talking about is not the information as such, but the fermented information that will go into knowledge and eventually in this old categorial wisdom. There is also inflation of information and we can say that a multitude of information produces a broad minded man but also psychological fragmentation. So I think it is hard to see how we can change reality. I hope that building this infrastructure - and that is a global infrastructure - we will be able to cope with it.

> Jo Groebel:

I would like to stress another thing. Some people might say that the amount of information leads to more rationality but what are we doing with that information? Everybody thinks he is well informed but what is the consequence of it? Take for example the war in Bosnia, lots of people are upset but what is the consequence? We believe, because we have thought of things, we have already done something about it, so more information leads also to more irrationality.

> Nenad Fiser:

The pictures of the war in peoples heads are in fact virtual reality. These wars do not exist, they are just pictures on the screen to inform or to entertain you. We have a different relationship with reality. We do not belong and share the same reality. The people in Los Angeles were shocked to find out that virtual reality became reality when there was an earthquake. They knew, rationally, that it existed, but when they experienced it, they really knew.

> Awee Prins:

Two questions about the open systems Jo Groebel mentioned in his lecture. First the spectrum of identities that is available, is this really a variety or a complete fragmentation or are new subcultures of identity emerging? Second, what is really qualitatively and quantitatively changing? You told of these love affairs on Internet, there have always been people pretending to be someone else. What is really new?

>Jo Groebel:

New is the acceleration of time. It used to take time to enter a group, to develop empathy. When you see somebody in the street or when you enter a room, it takes a while to establish a relationship, even a short commitment. Something must happen. On Internet, people appear in a flick. In a few seconds you can choose from a variety of identities. The structural difference is that it still takes time to establish an empathy and in the new media there is not enough time.

> Heinz Kimmerle:

Is the acceleration of time specific for Western culture and will other cultures follow? Do other cultures deal differently with it?

> Nenad Fiser:

If we accelerate time, what do we do with the rest of the time which is physically available between two sunrises? The answer is of course, time is devoted to production. The idea of calling up let us say the Chinese government to complain because they are building the biggest fridge factory in the world and we know that fridges cause the hole in the ozone layer, and the answer is no problem we will not build it, just find employment for our workers. The idea is we are very interested to sell something for a profit. The moment when you are advanced enough to take care of the other issues, is the moment when you start to care about them. Americans did not bother too much about the production of refrigerators and spray cans in their own country, until the moment it was possible to make a profit in another part of the industry. I can clearly imagine the scenario of an average worker who works in an entertainment industry that fills your leisure time, to release you from the stress. Where did you get stress? The stress is built up from working for a living. There is a certain circularity in it. That is why it is dangerous to be a member of a stress inducing culture. I do not know the answer to the question what other driving force is there besides profit making that exists today on this planet. We all are after profit making. All of Western culture is. Everything that we talk about in terms of human values comes only after the profit making. So that is how I understand it. It is extremely hard to prove otherwise. The argument offered by Chomsky, whom I respect, is really quite heavy. When we are speaking of accelerating time, it is not only done to give us a wealth of information, of benefit, it is to compress time. The more can be produced or reproduced in the same unit of time in a pattern of social life, which I illustrated with this mourning period, which was considered as socially acceptable, is following production period.

> Awee Prins:

So you do not believe that any dialogue with other cultures can change that.
This acceleration will be dominant everywhere.

Nenad Fiser:

No, it is certain that nothing is endlessly developing. But I do not see that any of the far East cultures could become an equal member of the world community unless they follow the path and the path is accelerating in an exponential scale which means the fact that you are only one year behind today, in a year that will be two years and then five and so on. Without a really revolutionary, technological jar that would make you catch up, you do not stand a chance. We also have social time machines, what happened in Iran and what happens now in Bosnia show definitely time machines. We are going back centuries.

> Jo Groebel:

There is a new proudness in Singapore for example. Proudness in being much more productive than the Western world due to their specific culture. They combine Western productivity concepts with Asian efficiency. It is interesting to see the rejection of Western ideas, we do not follow any more, they have their own measures of stimulating and punishing et cetera. At the same time they are proud of the leading position in productivity rates.

> Nenad Fiser:

You are neglecting the fact that the value system that produces the feeling of pride by the worker in Asia was implemented during the last 35 years. So the fact that you should be happy that you earn this and that, does fall within the productive context. Let us see what kind of leisure time these people do have.

7

PHILOSOPHERS
ENTER THE INTERCULTURAL DEBATE

Heinz Kimmerle

The newspapers, sociologisrs, futurologists and others are telling us that rhe world is becoming a 'global village'. Indeed, what we are doing and what we are thinking in one part of the world is interconnected with action and thought in all other parts. Many philosophers are ignoring rhis fact up till now. We can see worldwide interconnection in economy, politics, science, and in culture. Many problems therefore, have to be situated on a worldwide level: rhe production and distribution of food, the struggle against poverry and overpopulation, the development and conrrol of the technology of weapons, the way in which results of medical, physical and other sciences are used, and the determination of the role of arr in public life.

With regard to these problems, which are summed up here rather arbitrarily, an international cooperation is necessary. This cooperation can only be carried out properly if cultural differences between different countries, groups of countries or parts of the world are taken into account. How can people of different cultures communicate with each other and how should they do it? It is clear to me, that this question has to be put by philosophers, too. When philosophers of different cultures try to come to a serious and continuous cooperation, the principles of intercultural communication have to be dealt with practically and theoretically. In doing

so, philosophy can develop a crirical view and possibly set an example in the whole intercultural field.The consequence of the enormous srreams of refugees in the second half of the 20rh century is thar in many societies people of very differenr cultures must live together on the same terrirory. This phenomenon of multiculturaliry also leads to difficult problems for which nobody has good solutions at this moment. Discrimination and acts of violence occur daily in these societies; they vary between refusing to give a job or a house on the one hand and bomb attacks or mutilation of bodies on the other. The well known political answers ro these problems were labelled in the seventies and eighties as 'special politics for minorities', until rhis conception itself was regarded ro be discriminating. After that the positions oscillate between a politics of 'integration' and of 'maintenance of cultural identity'. Philosophers mostly keep silent with regard to these problems. If from the firsr sreps of intercultural communication among philosophers something can be learned to solve these problems, it is in the first place that we must try to overcome the difficulties, which rise from discrimination in a caurious and open manner. In the second place it has become obvious that within a multicultural society which is more or less unstructured, good strategies for solving rhe difficulties are rarher impossible. An open dialogue between cultures which clearly

remain different, has to be established. If we apply the German word 'Aus-einander-setzung' in this context, it means that an intercultural dialogue has to take place as separating and bringing together at the same time. Thirdly, and this is the most important point: the multicultural situation must not only be looked at as a problem or a danger, but rather as an advantage and an enrichment, because it gives a chance to use different starting points in building a multicultural society.

With this short outline of an intercultural debate and the part which philosophers play or do not play in it, I do not want to give the impression that philosophers have the task or the capability to tell how the problems in the fields of economy, politics, technology et cetera can be solved. What I want to initiate is an intercultural debate in the field of philosophy itself. How this debate can influence thought in general via different types of theory which belong to applied sciences or via other channels, has to become obvious after it is started. A certain prognostic view or an endeavour to give direction to these influences may be possible and even necessary, but it is not apt to predict or to direct the practical consequences of a philosophical theory in its totality. On the contrary, it would be a wrong idea about the relation of theory and practice, if they are put into an opposition like that. To philosophize in itself is some kind of practice and it establishes some kind of politics, which are interwoven with other types of practice and of politics.

To enter the intercultural debate in the field of philosophy means that philosophers of a certain culture go and study seriously and continuously the philosophies of other cultures. Philosophers will be able to do that if they have a critical view on their own tradition of thought and if they see certain limitations of it. In the first instance, it is necessary to learn and collect knowledge and to reflect on the possibilities of understanding philosophies of other cultures. Since more than a hundred years Western philosophers are studying Eastern philosophies. And in the field of the philosophy of religion, Western scholars are working at the collection of knowledge about Islamic theology and philosophy already for centuries. You can find departments at

western universities - not really big departments, but seriously working departments - devoting their work to these kinds of intercultural studies. But this should not be all; in the same way it is necessary to study the philosophies of Africa, South of the Sahara, of South-East Asia, of Middle and South America and of other parts of the world. In my book "*Philosophie in Afrika*"- "*afrikanische Philosophie*", I have tried to start with the work of studying and understanding the philosophy of another culture in this broad sense of intercultural philosophy and to explore the field of studies which can be used for this task.

This first step in the area of intercultural philosophy has lead me to the following insights. The approach to the philosophy of another culture changes the view on the own tradition of thought. On the one hand a new feeling comes up for certain streams within the own tradition which are forgotten, ignored or denied. On the other hand the criticism with regard to the main streams of Western thought is clarified and strengthened. Especially a certain self criticism of Western tradition is unavoidable which brings to the fore that since the age of Enlightenment - in the clearest and most radical way with Hegel and Heidegger - Western philosophy is regarded to be unique in the world. This double return to the own tradition after the first endeavour to investigate the philosophy of another culture, makes it possible to describe the issue of an intercultural philosophy in more general terms and to locate it 'in between' different cultures. You leave so to speak the own traditional position of Western philosophy and you do not arrive, maybe you never will arrive, at the position of the philosophy of another culture.

A second step by which these insights are worked out is documented in a volume which also contains necessary supplements of the first book on African philosophy.

The title of this book is: Die Dimension des Interkulturellen. Supplemente und Verallge- meinerungsschritte. From the very beginning, I have stated that an intercultural philosophy and also the way which leads to it, has to be 'dialogic'. By that I mean that the philosophies of other cultures are not just a subject-matter of study and of comparison, as it is done in the departments of

'comparative philosophy'. These departments moreover restrain their work mostly to a comparison between Western and Eastern philosophies. It is also insufficient to take over certain aspects of other philosophies because they are missing or underestimated in the own tradition. This practice we find in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche with regard to the thoughts of nothingness and of suffering, in Bataille and Barthes with regard to the practice of sacrifice and the thought of emptiness, or in Merleau-Ponty with regard to the contents of pre-reflective layers of consciousness. Heidegger, who intended to restrain philosophy to what had taken place in European history from Parmenides and Plato to Hegel and Nietzsche, is himself engaged in an intercultural dialogue, with what he calls 'thinkers' from Japan and Korea. Being ready for a real dialogue, however, means that you have to expect that the other is telling something which you by no means can tell yourself. By such a dialogue your own consciousness can be enriched, but it is also possible that you come to the conclusion that the other is telling something which you cannot give a place (up to this moment) in your own consciousness. If the last thing will happen, you will have to keep it as something not understood or even not understandable in your own
consciousness.

After this first endeavour to study the philosophy of another culture and after this double return to the own philosophical tradition, I begin to see how this intercultural philosophical dialogue can be given shape and what the subjects are which can be dealt with in such a dialogue. I am preparing a third book on African philosophy, in which examples of this dialogue are worked out. The title of this book will be: Mazungumzo, a word from the Swahili language, which is spoken in different East-African countries (in Tanzania and in parts of Kenya and Uganda), which means: 'dialogue', 'conversation', 'to talk with each other'. The prefix 'Ma' says that one is speaking about people or living beings; zun-gum-zo' gives an impression of the sound when people talk in a well-balanced, very comparable, but not identical way with each other. In this book first of all, African philosophy is presented in a short overview of the main streams of this philosophical

tradition. Because traditional African philosophy - if we leave aside a few exceptions - is handed down orally, a methodological reflection is necessary, in order to determine how sources of African philosophy can be found and how they have to be used.

In the intercultural philosophical work a number of subjects have come to the fore, on which a dialogue seems to be necessary and useful: the concepts of truth and time, communalism as the sense of community and the philosophy of 'we', socialism and democracy, the notions of family, people and nation, perspectives of development and the special part which art and philosophy can play in it, the unity of aesthetics and morality, the invisible world of spirits, and - last not least - the problem of death. These subjects will be dealt with in a book which is written in the Dutch language. This has to do with the fact that since 1990 I have been building up the scientific discipline of 'intercultural philosophy' at a Dutch institution, the Faculty of Philosophy of Erasmus University Rotterdam.

All the subjects mentioned above have in common that they can not be treated appropriately departing only from one philosophical tradition, be it Western or African. The input from another philosophical background is indispensable in order to come to a satisfactory treatment. Moreover, these are obviously subjects African and Western philosophers are interested in, which is a good starting point in order to come to a common endeavour. All these subjects are centred around key notions of African and Western thought. In the present state of affairs I can only give a fragmentary explanation of the way in which they are treated in African and in Western philosophy. In some cases the explanation of African thought forms the starting point, in others I start with the use in Western traditions. The choice of these subjects is rather arbitrary, and the treatment depends on my present state of knowledge. Before all, I want to stress the fact that another choice is possible and that no subject and no approach is excluded in advance.

The intercultural philosophical dialogue is also called a 'dialogue between North and South'; it is given shape, especially in South America, as a 'philosophy of liberation'. I have some objections against this

terminology. In the first place I think it is important that many different dialogues can take place. They are not embedded in an 'unlimited community of communicating partners', as Dussel puts it, but happen always between partners with limited cultural and philosophical backgrounds. If there is a covering instance for all of them, I find that in the formulation of Hölderlin that 'ein Gespräch wir sind und hören können von einander'. To this 'ein Gespräch sein', I want to contribute by the dialogues on which I am working.

Secondly, for the intercultural philosophical dialogues, the principle of equality seems to be more important than that of liberty. They have to take place under the conditions of complete equality. In this respect they can be compared with democracy. Philosophy and democracy have in common that everybody has the right to speak. Jacques Derrida has made clear that this right to speak is related to the fact that it takes place in the context of serious philosophical, respectively political speaking, which have their own codes and subcodes. Equality does not exist without difference; we keep presupposing equality, because there are differences. This means: in the intercultural philosophical dialogues, just as in democratic politics, equality is still coming ('venir'), it is and it remains future ('avenir').

Thirdly, according to me the dichotomy of North and South is not an adequate description of the present situation in the world. In a recent publication of the 'Deutsche Stiftung für internationale Entwicklung' it is rightly stated that the North not only has penetrated the South, but also vice versa. The process of mixing up is on its way; there are islands of the South in the North and islands of the North in the South. If you draw an unambiguous borderline between North and South, the other will be 'outside' and this outside can become the aim of projections of fear and hate as well as of hope and wishful thinking. However, I cannot agree with the statement of N. Alexander from South Africa in the same publication, that within the multicultural societies of the world, Western 'core cultures' with 'regional cultures' in the margin have crystallized. I will maintain the opposite, that this kind of superiority-

thinking has to be avoided. What the results of the mutual influences will be, has to remain open.

Another important point I want to put forward is, that the dialogues between African and Western philosophies are not a hermeneutical enterprise. At any rate the claim of universality of hermeneutics has to be rejected, which departs from the presupposition that any other - in which context of culture he or she may be situated - can be understood. Hans-Georg Gadamer, who has laid the foundations of a hermeneutical philosophy, defends this universal understanding. Intercultural philosophy cannot agree with his position. The other of another culture remains perhaps more alien and outside the realm of understanding than he or she can really be understood. The wish and the claim to be able to understand anybody in intercultural perspective in fact seems to be a sign of the 'good will to power', as Derrida once has characterised the project of Gadamer. Of course, there has to be understood something in intercultural philosophy. Otherwise the partners of the dialogue would miss one another completely when speaking together. But the expectation that every time a dialogue will lead to a common horizon, in which a third position is reached by bringing together the different opinions, is not realistic. What the result of a dialogue will be cannot be predicted and it will probably be different in different cases. Certainly, the deadlock of Western and African philosophies with regard to quite a number of vital problems will not be overcome by putting together the theoretical stores of both traditions.

In the above mentioned text of Hölderlin he does not say that we, as humans who speak in the way of being a 'Gespräch', will understand each other, but that we 'can listen to each other'. What is important in an intercultural dialogue - and that is not only true in the phase of beginning it - is the ability to listen. This means that we sometimes have to postpone understanding in favour of the continuation of listening, because we cannot or not yet locate what we hear in a context in which it is understandable. I have stressed the necessity of this 'methodology of listening' already several times and I have made the remark that 'within the dialogue... there is a primacy

of listening'.

By these observations however, the usefulness of hermeneutics is drastically limited only for the intercultural communication. There are schools within African philosophy who make use of hermeneutics in an intracultural context. During the '70s and '80s this was true for a number of philosophers from Kinshasa, who published preferably in the series Recherches Philosophiques Africaines. O. w'Oleko Okolo formulates the principles of a critical Heidegger-reception by African philosophers, as it had taken place before all in Kinshasa. He judges positively the 'theory of tradition and of language', that is to say the hermeneutical impact of Heidegger's thought. The hermeneutical studies which have been worked out on this base have initiated a big project of collecting titles and texts by Father A.J. Smet, which should be taken into account when African philosophy is dealt with. More recently T. Serequeberhan, who teaches at Hampshire College in the United States, has published an interpretation of the phenomenon 'African philosophy' starting from hermeneutic premises. His major theme is the political philosophy of Senghor, Fanon, Cabral and others, who have worked out their theories during the struggle for independence.

Also the later work of K. Wiredu, who was born in Ghana and teaches now in Tampa (Florida), can be regarded as an important hermeneutical endeavour. After his earlier book on Philosophy and an African culture, which is strongly influenced by the Anglosaxon type of analytical philosophy, his recent work is on explaining core concepts of African languages (in his case it is Twi, the language of the Akan) in English. On the other hand he shows how important concepts of Western thought - which had been translated uncarefully and wrongly, also in connection with the translation of the Bible - have to be expressed correctly in African languages. This is a very difficult hermeneutical project, of which a few examples already have been carried out. These examples show how difficult it is to build a bridge from African to Western languages and vice versa, if there is a serious concern to give precise equivalents. If we draw an analogy with the dialogues, which I am working on, they are much more at the surface, because at the side of the partners of

the dialogues English, French or German contributions of African philosophers are used in which concepts of African languages are quoted only incidentally.

It is not necessary to make sure that hermeneutics within Western philosophy - before all in the intracultural discourse - is highly estimated. The limitation of its usefulness in the context of intercultural philosophy however, also means that its intracultural value is relativized. If the claim of universality of hermeneutics no longer can be accepted, the limits of understanding have to be reconsidered also intracultural. This task could be described adequately as a 'critique of hermeneutical reason'.

In connection with the limitation of hermeneutics in intercultural philosophy I want to tell that the discourse of the dialogues is not given shape as a continuous argumentation. In my first book on African philosophy I am using four different types of text. This is not the case in all the dialogues which I am working on at present. But there is always some kind of experimental use of language and different styles are applied.

The choice of the core concepts which are the subject of the dialogues, is to a certain extent arbitrary, as I have mentioned already. Other subjects can be chosen, for instance the concept of knowledge, the concept and ethics of work, phenomena as witchcraft or incantation. I am not dealing with religious concepts, deliberately, although they play a very important part in African thought. The intercultural dialogue in the field of religion is going on already for quite a time. In the Netherlands I could mention names as Gerrie ter Haar and Anton Houtepen in Utrecht, Gerrit Huizer in Nijmegen, M. Schoffeleers in Utrecht, G. van't Spijker in Zwolle, F.J. Verstraelen in Leiden or H. Vroom in Amsterdam. Many of their texts can be regarded as supplements to my studies of African thought, and I hope that my studies can be regarded as supplements of the ongoing intercultural dialogue on religious problems.

The question can rightly be put whether Africa is not much more in need of other things than dialogues on philosophical core concepts. Today many African countries are suffering from hunger, civil wars and economic misery. Even countries which seem to be rather stable politically as Senegal,

Ivory Coast and Ghana, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania or Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa under Mandela have to struggle very hard for economic survival. These conditions, of course, have consequences for the possibility to work on philosophy. Nevertheless, it remains necessary to take the philosophical work in Africa seriously, also by searching for possibilities of an intercultural dialogue. The organisations which give money for development aid by no means can be convinced that it is necessary to give support to the philosophy departments in African universities. Western philosophers can only offer financial aid for visiting scholars in both directions and for projects of cooperation. By going on with the dialogues, some of the 'other' Africa can be made visible, namely those parts of the continent which are leading a fascinating life within a situation of suffering and misery. Finally, it is important to make clear that also in difficult times thinking about philosophical problems is not just a superfluous luxury, but a contribution to the task of thinking through the most general and, therefore, the most far reaching conditions of a possible way to the future.

With regard to the difficult political and economic relations between Africa and the West it will be necessary to reflect on the 'experience of failing', especially in the field of development aid. In the publication of the 'Deutsche Stiftung für internationale Entwicklung', which I have mentioned above, one of the authors speaks of a 'circle of failing', which can be broken through, if it could be made clear that egoistic and destructive motives have often been the background of a so called endeavour to help. It is not easy at all to think over alternative starting points for the politics of development which can be useful in practical life.

Happily I am not the only one to work on this task and to build up intercultural philosophy as a necessary dimension of philosophizing in the present world. First of all I want to mention the members of a research group at Erasmus University Rotterdam who are working together with me on problems of 'intercultural philosophy' since 1990. D. Tiemersma is working mainly in the field of Indian philosophy, but is also engaged in research on African philosophy; and H.A.F. Oosterling has special knowledge

about Japanese culture and thought. F.U. Uyanne is bringing in his experiences in Nigeria where he comes from, especially with regard to political thought. E.H. de Schipper and J. Hoogland are concentrating on the starting conditions of intercultural thought in Western philosophical traditions. Also J.W.J. van den Oord is participating regularly in this work. In the Netherlands contacts have been established with Raymond Corbey in Tilburg, Wilhelm Duprè and Gerrit Steunebrink in Nijmegen. A special cooperation in the field of African philosophy is set up with Pieter Boele van Hensbroek in Groningen, B. Ramose in Tilburg and Jups Kluyskens in Leiden; in Germany this cooperation takes place with Jürgen Hengelbrock in Bochum and Gerd-Rüdiger Hoffmann in Berlin, and in Austria with Christian Neugebauer and his co-editors of the 'Zeitschrift für Afrikastudien', which is published in Vienna. In the Dutch-speaking area, the cooperation is clustered in the 'Dutch-Flemish Association for Intercultural Philosophy'.

Despite the methodological differences, there is an affinity with comparative philosophy. In Antwerp U. Libbrecht has founded a school for comparative philosophy and he has published a book called "*Inleiding Comparatieve Filosofie*". It will be clear that intercultural philosophy does not only want to compare, but to come to a dialogue, and that no limitation of a special preference for Eastern thought exists. R.A. Mall, who has established a society for intercultural philosophy in Germany, started also with a special relation between Western and Eastern philosophies. This is obvious already from the title of his book "*Die drei Geburtsorte der Philosophie: China, Indien, Griechenland*". In his more recent publications he is working to lay the foundations of intercultural philosophy in a general sense of the word. Together with Mall, I am the editor of the Studies in Intercultural Philosophy with contributions in German, English and French. F.M. Wimmer from Vienna has presented interesting systematical and historical studies in Interkulturelle Philosophie in a book with this title and in other publications. I mention here the volume Postkoloniales Philosophieren: Afrika , which Wimmer has edited together with H. Nagl-Docekal.

In the United States of America the subject 'intercultural philosophy' is treated already on a broader scale in academic research and teaching. I only name B. Mohanty in Philadelphia, PA who is studying before all Indian philosophy and L. Outlaw in Haverford, PA who is especially treating African philosophy. The fact that quite a number of philosophers from Africa have been appointed at American universities during the last decennia says something about the attractiveness of their philosophical contributions, but also about the poor conditions of work in the countries where they have come from. The 'Society for African Philosophy in North-America' (SAPINA) regularly publishes a Newsletter edited by V.Y. Mudimbe from Kinshasa in Zaire, who is working at Duke University in North Carolina. The well-known publisher 'Routledge' in London and New York is preparing an Encyclopedia of Philosophy which will contain, besides seven volumes on the history of Western philosophy and fourteen volumes on systematic topics, also seven volumes on the philosophies of non-Western cultures. That may mark a first breakthrough if we consider that the General Editor Edward Craig writes: 'improving understanding and increasing respect for the philosophy of other cultures is an aim' to which the editors of the Encyclopedia 'very well commit themselves'. In this context it is worthwhile to remark that the volume on 'African philosophy' is written by Kwame Anthony Appiah who is an African himself.

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FOOT-NOTES]

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> Heinz Kimmerle:

I am very impressed by your lecture and your way of making things clear and to show them by not showing them directly. I think this is a very important contribution to explain what a double bind is in the colonial as well in the post colonial period. We have to realize this midnight situation you have pointed out. In this whole discourse I want to stress that we must not forget what dominance means and not only know what the sharp edges of dominance are, but what the real sharpness of dominance means within an ambiguous situation and within experiences which show that being suppressed, also exercised by the suppressed, evokes maybe feelings of laughter. I am very much in sympathy with this way of thinking that we have to look at both sides, the different sides of history, colonisation and decolonisation but I sometimes think there is a danger in forgetting what domination and dominance really mean. In the way this symposium is set up, dominance is one side of the subject, the other one is to shape the seventh continent, finding a way to build up a multicultural society with its positive effects. So in the first place I want to stress that we must not speak too easily about dominance and perhaps take away the negative, cruel aspects of it and on the other hand I want to invite you and all of the others to think more and deeper about the process of decolonisation in its ambiguity and in its very different scopes to find a way to an aim which is not clear yet.

> Sarat Maharaj:

I think with Heinz's work the idea that crossed my mind was Houtzinger's work, here in Leiden. He had dealt with sanskrit literature and the concept of play and he tried to examine protestant notions of culture and the legacy of protestantism on Dutch culture in relationship to notions of play and notions of punning and notions of a form of relationship in representation in which the model is totally non productive and that of a non productive god. He sought in India a god that did not work for six days and then rests on the Sabbath, but a god that danced at the universe as part of the play of masculine and feminine energies. This was the project that Houtzinger set himself in Leiden and spent many, many years studying the culture of India and Sanskrit. But at the end of it, Houtzinger 'found it all' in the clarity of what was called the protestant spirit. You see, the language of the period is very part of the way he spoke of these things, writing in the twenties and thirties. Although he had some extremely interesting things to say about the relationship between play and work, productive and non productive thinking - which of course all those notions of non productiveness have now come into post-structuralist thinking from your early reference to Bataille and if I might add Guattari, Deleuze and all thinkers who have placed great importance on kinds of non productive, non capitalist principles

as an interpretative tool for cultural analysis - but at the end of the day Houtzinger came back to say how clear minded the protestant ethic was, how much it allowed one to achieve, how much it organised the world and made it clean and hygienic and livable and modern. And for these reasons, he retracted in the end. I was very interested in the point you made taking the study of the philosophy of another culture, about the constant potential of being charmed by its exoticism, by the fact that it has a total difference to offer and then to find a kind of recoil to all of that, a kind of reversal from which it produces an even more punishing attitude towards that culture in, as it were, the second round. Houtzinger is a big example that comes into mind at the moment.

Then that part of your contribution I found very important and crucial to any cultural exchange, the sensitivity to the fact that one is not simply moving to a kind of exoticism only to return to control it in a more powerful way by dismissing it to a certain extent. But that was the important part. What I want a bit more clarification on, is your outline for this sort of endeavour that we cannot begin the intercultural exchange intercultural project until we know ourselves. For me, I found that very hard to see how one could know oneself outside immediately constructing the picture of the other. I see that as a dialectal situation straight away that even as the ancient yogi sitting there freezing on the Himelaya's, asking the ancient question 'Who am I?'; I feel they were still caught up with the Indians in the plane, with not them, do you see? The Buddha's word: 'netti, netti, netti', not that, not that, not that. So the negation of the other is always present in the search for the self. From the ancient prospective of Indian philosophy, I ask you this question·of the German philosophers: how is it possible to find the self without constructing and projecting the picture of the other at the same time?

> Heinz Kimmerle:

Of course it is not. What I try to think about is a radical way of otherness. Of course talking about yourself, talking about myself, always means talking about the other as well. I can only find out aspects of what I am by delimitating it from what I am not and what maybe the other is. This dialectic is very well known to me. If you try to come into an exchange with the thinking or philosophy of another field or another culture, otherness is a quality. Hegel has discussed the problem of otherness in the way that·the otherness is only the other side of the self. What I want to work at and what I want to direct my thought to, is not otherness in the radical sense of the word. Otherness is only the other side of the self. So what can otherness mean if it is the otherness of the other? In order to put this question you should have an idea about the position you are departing from. Not in the way that there is a real knowledge, that you could explain who you are. I think the picture of weaving and unweaving is a very adequate one for thinking what the self means. There is some history of this process of weaving and unweaving and you can study that history. At the same time that this process is going on in confrontation with otherness and the other in a more radical sense of the word, also this weaving and unweaving will come into another phase, will be a process that is much more open to you, like the process of decolonisation. That is what we do not know now. That is not a dialectical process in the sense that we know what the aim is, be it with a lot of negations and difficult steps. We have to find the way without knowing where it is leading to. That is the process of weaving and unweaving in a much more open, dangerous and adventurous way.

> Franz Kaiser:

I am just interested in Kimmerle's position about establishing a philosophical dialogue with the other. How much ethnological scholarship is used, is there any influence?

> Heinz Kimmerle:

That is an important point. The whole project of African philosophy is an interdisciplinary project. Leo Apostel, who recently died, wrote very clearly that we can only find out what African philosophy is, if we use an interdisciplinary approach in which of course cultural anthropology and ethnology play a very important part. All which is done for instance interfered with belief systems. Ethnological research of course is a very important source to get to know the way of thinking, incorporated in belief systems. The famous conversations with Ogotomeli which Griaule has had, is material from ethnological research and highly important for delimitating what African thought can be and finding the way to a dialogue.

> Franz Kaiser:

I put the question because I was astonished when you said in your lecture that the role of the sages in African cultures has been neglected, has not been discovered by ethnology but especially the interviews with Ogotomeli done by Griaule are very influential on the French school of ethnology.

> Heinz Kimmerle:

That is true. Of course you could question whether the institution of the sage can be found in many African peoples and what their function is for it has not been described in anthropological research. In a certain way, this is an exception. These very important dialogues came across by chance. Ogotomeli decided, after having contact with Griaule for more than fifteen years, to tell him his wisdom.

> Chris Dercon:

Your project on African philosophy still seems to be based on mere translation, while the project of Sarat Maharaj seems more important because it is not only an endeavour based on art works instead of a project of translation. It seems a project of conceptualizing. Today we are dealing with the difficulty who is going to show what? Is the museum of ethnography in Leiden or Rotterdam fit to show these endeavours of Hamad Bud and the others? Should Witte de With and Boymans change the style or should we try to cooperate with the Rotterdam Festival and integrate artists? The question is for Sarat Maharaj, it is very interesting that you link the endeavours for instance of Hamad Bud to the endeavours of Marcel Duchamp and as you know, the museum of Modern Art in New York was born at the moment when art was no longer possible which was illustrated by the non-acceptance of the ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp. It seems to me that what you are trying to say could imply that there is a second moment of acceleration after the ready-made, in which again art is impossible. Would it lead to re-invent another kind of institution, another kind of museum of modern art? In order to avoid the question what those guys are going to do in the Haags Gemeentemuseum or what Rudi Fuchs is not going to do, what is the museum of ethnography going to do, what should Boymans do etcetera? Is that the way you see it or could we think about it in another way?

> Sarat Maharaj:

Your idea is very suggestive, the idea that we need a new kind of institution. I think the suggested element is in the fact that the very moment that sees the making of the Museum of Modern Art in New York is the moment when Marcel Duchamp made the compendium of his collected works, put it in a suitcase and called it the portable museum. He made a miniature of every work he had done up till then and put them in a box and you open that box like a portable medieval altarpiece, and look at the Duchamp collection. This was his way of also showing that the kind of institutionalisation that would follow this kind of modification of art, with the making of big museums, was something to bear in mind. But I think that was then caught up with the second crisis. What happened to the old spaces, the legacies from the 19th century, the ethnographic museums, the range of museums which in some way feel because of their collecting practices vis à vis the non-Western world, they have a stake now in speaking for elements of those cultures that are present through the migrations in Europe? It is very hard to say that only one solution is the right one. It seems there are many practices possible to me because there are many terrains of conscienceness and awareness about these issues. In some places, the question is simply a matter of making a particular group of people around a particular ethnographic museum, making them aware that there is this collection and that this collection is not a set of fossils, of fetishes from a primitive barbaric past, they have something to say to the present. That might be some kind of practice that a particular place takes up. The connection with Duchamp, with Hamad Bud, with the impossibility of art practice, all of this does demand a new institution and it is more connected with the drives towards internationalisation. Internationalisation here is separated from notions like globalisation and standardisation but is an attempt to make a kind of art which first of all owes a great deal to the Western concept of autonomous art that emerged in the 20th century. This is something many people from non-Western cultures feel uncomfortable with, but the idea of autonomous art, with this I mean an art which in each one of its events draws up its principles of making from

the event itself. The connection of these kind of practice, which was the big achievement of 20th century Western art, with questions of post coloniality do begin to demand a new kind of institution, but who will create these institutions?

> Chris Dercon:

I am asking that also, because the museum is born from the 18th and 19th century notion of precisely nationalisation and colonisation. Now we have to deal with the process of internationalisation, so is the museum still fit to receive these objects in order to posit them as an alibi for yet another process of colonisation and neutralisation?

> Sarat Maharaj:

It is not. This is the crisis of the museum space, the crisis of making a work of art and then finding a place where it has to be shown. So this is why increasingly, works of art are made in ways that do not require the four walls of an institution, that do not require the end product to be an object. These are just some solutions that have been thrown up in recent debates over the resistance to how a museum by its very nature, frames the works of art, however internationalistic spirit of its content, the museum itself is a space that frames positions and contextualises the work and then sets it on its journey of circulation in a very particular decoded way. And to break the grip of that process is what the whole debate around the museum space is about.

> Franz Kaiser:

The example of Hamad Bud is a good one, because you know how he was treated in the press. Do you think that the press in England did the right thing not to stress the Asian background of Hamad Bud? Some groups in London were complaining about that.

> Sarat Maharaj:

According to what I said in my contribution, these are the tensions of the state of play, that this is the situation wherein some constituency feel that at every turn one must say, British born or Asian origin. Other groups say 'well it does not matter for Hamad Bud that he was from that sort of background but the work in fact dealt with gender, with sexuality, with certain notions of Englishness and with Islamic fundamentalism. But that is again simplifying the work and there are many cuts into the work. The press took a particular cut into it, about the poisonous element of the project here and put up on his behalf, in the Tate, and the presses angle was 'here is another case of avant garde art work which is incomprehensible, poisonous and generally terrifying to any visitor to the Tate'. This time your life itself is in danger.

> Heinz Kimmerle:

Comment on Dercons remarks, I would like to confine myself and my endeavour to mere translation. Of course you have to know what translation means, that real translation is not possible at all. That is why we have to continue to work on it.

9

DIALOGUE
AMONG DEAFS

Franz Kaiser

The statement has been made that I consider art to be a Western concept. This needs a correction. I do not advocate that art is an exclusively Western concept, it is historically a Western concept. I think that if one wants to engage into this whole 'multi-culti' discussion, it is necessary to inquire about the concept of 'art'. What is it about? Heinz Kimmerle pointed out that we need to think about the starting point from which we approach the other and I believe this is more important, if we reflect on what Pieter Pekelharing said yesterday. His suggestion, to think of multiculturalism as opposed to a big melting pot, was most interesting. To me this is a crucial point. What do we want to deal with? Do we want to have a melting process in which everything is supposed to be more or less the same, or should we have a kind of confrontation between different qualities that somehow enrich each other and produce something new? This question leads us to the problem of which Sarat Maharaj spoke this morning: the ambiguity that is inherent to binary positions. Binary positions, he said, include the notion of power relationships. The question of power relationships always comes up in the discussion between the West and the non-West. The Western part is always desperately trying not to fall into a power discourse and the non-Western part says: there you are again in a power discourse.

A recurrent problem with this kind of dialogue is that most of the time people attach different meanings to the words that are used. Consequently they do not quite understand each other. If there is a dialogue, we need to agree upon the denotations of the words that are used. With this idea in mind, I went through some recent writings representing positions that defend an integration of non-Western cultures in terms of equality. Such an integration is, to be sure, an honourable endeavour and in the long run certainly inevitable, but the danger is that such an equality comes very close to the flatness of the encroaching world media culture. My concern here is: where is the space left for a more sophisticated culture, traditionally called 'high'-culture? This morning we spoke about the role of the institutions and my lecture will deal with that subject.

In the writings I studied, I could discern two main stream discourses - every text that I read can be more or less classified as belonging to either one or the other. The two discourses are passionately opposed to each other, which is even more astounding as both are fighting for the same cause: the integration of non-Western art.

The first discourse I shall call discourse A; it is the discourse of the Western curator, who sees himself as enlightened and who tries to establish a dialogue, an opening up

of the Western art world. He is even enlightened enough to realize that he is ethnocentric, and he says, 'I can't do anything about it, because everyone is predetermined by his own culture'. But by that token he tacitly assumes that he, the Western curator, again is in the position of the arbiter, he who decides for the world what good art is, what art is at all and what not. I associate this discourse with the exhibition Magiciens de la Terre and I identify, as a contradiction, its pretention to act against Western predominance, to organise the first true global exhibition, to be open and tolerant - but simultaneously, confirm the colonial position of the Western arbiter.

The other discourse, I call it discourse B, is usually held by non-Western artists, like Rasheed Araeen, who are fighting for the acceptance of non-Western artists in the Western art world. They criticise the different treatment according to the artist's passport by an ethnocentric Western art world, and attack the A-discourse, not for its ethnocentrism, but because non-Western art is only accepted by these enlightened curators if it has an ethnic touch. According to discourse B this is an obstacle to any equal treatment. They want non-Western art to be judged by the same criteria as Western art. You see the contradiction: If non-Western art is judged according to the same, that is Western criteria, again submitted to the Western arbiter and, again, it confirms the Western predominance. And if we look at the criteria for objective quality, used by both discourses, we find expressions like individualism, originality, progress and historical consciousness, which are all originally Western values.

Both discourses are based on an under-lying assumption. The equality that is striven for, is basically a Western equality according to the Western model. The tacit assumption which is never really addressed, is - and I think a misunderstanding emerges right here - that there is something like an objective quality in the art world. Instead of expressing this underlying assumption, both discourses easily divert into some kind of ordinary moralism. The West is attacked for its ethnocentricity, for its arrogance, racism, even perversion and colonialism. On the other hand, there is a plea addressed to humanism and human rights which are also

Western.

Coming back to the A-discourse, there is much opposition against Western materialism and rationality, looked upon as perverted. There is a kind of ideal of 'back to the roots', an idea that a dialogue could be established beyond language, a dialogue that could transgress cultural limits. The underlying idea is that of a spirituality close to the Jungian concept of the common unconscious.

In the B-discourse we see a passionate position against all differences. Everything ought to be seen as more or less the same, close to Andy Warhol's 'anything goes'. Ethnic criteria are looked upon as discriminating. The result is that, apart from the ones referred to, criteria are missing. How to judge whether a work is good or bad when everything is the same? Instead, non-Western art should be appreciated for moral reasons. We can see, however, that history does not work according to moral principles, and if moral principles are imposed, this often has disastrous consequences. I remind you of our discussion about fundamentalism, it is very close to this question. Instead, we should try to understand the problem of either difference or sameness respectively.

An originally Western way - which has become the global way - to tackle problems is rationality, in other words: science and technology. If we talk about modernity as a cultural entity, we can say that, if it is defined by anything, it is defined by the assumption of rationality at its core. This culture has become the global culture, which is called Modernism.

For the sake of understanding the Western concept of art, which might lead to an agreement about the meaning of that word, please allow me a brief digression into history.

The cultural importance of rationality certainly comes from the scientific assumptions which are underlying the Western culture. Such basic assumptions developed into a whole organisational structure of Western society, which can be described as a process of demystification from religious world views. The process took several centuries and was accompanied by an increasing organisation of society according to rational principles. Rational organisation means specialisation. In Europe, a secular culture emerged from religious systems and

the rationality expressed itself in a structure of the social organism, which was defined by specialized administrations, by specialized spheres even: there was a sphere for politics, for jurisdiction, for economy, and a sphere for culture. Culture, thus, is also specialized in a sense, namely through liberation of the art object from its original functional context. Imagine the story of the altarpiece, taken away from the church it has been made for, and transferred to a museum. One wing might be in the National Gallery in Washington, another part in Munich. It is literally cut into pieces and spread over the world, it is decontextualised, which means literally: taken out of its context. This fact has certain implications: If you decontextualise an art work, it no longer has a meaning for the whole of society. It is somehow specialized.

Here a contradiction occurs that we have never really dealt with as a cultural community. It underlies all the revolutions of artists against the art institution, which we still witness today, but which started in the 19th century. The first occurrence of the artists' need to have a total impact on society (instead of being specialized) probably was 19th century's 'Gesamtkunstwerk', the concept of the 'oeuvre d'art total'. More strikingly, the 'ready made' is an endeavour to break up the institution and open it to everyday life. The project of having an impact on normal day life is the common denominator of all the avant-garde movements in the first half of this century. They all wanted to destroy the institution and to regain this almost cultic impact on everyone. We all know that these efforts failed. In his fine study *"The theory of avant garde"*, the German literary critic Peter Bürger states that the endeavour to get art into daily life failed. The idea of the avant-gardes was even copied by totalitarian systems, while they completely transformed the contents. Later, in the fifties, when the art centre shifted from Paris to New York, we witness the re-establishment of the autonomous art notion as the image of the free culture (Greenberg) as opposed to totalitarian culture. I conclude from this brief historical survey that there is a tragic link between the concept of art and art being decontextualised.

The consequences are on one hand that decontextualisation, as I exemplified it with the altar piece, basically means that the institution has developed in history as some entity with the potential to integrate all kinds of different cultures or fragments of such by decontextualising artifacts. Through fragmenting and decontextualising, these objects loose their quality as language. They no longer have a linguistic or symbolic meaning as they had in their original context. On the other hand, they enter the conventional framework of the art institution and can be perceived as art. This way to look at the concept of art is admittedly not too common in institutional art history. The loss of language means that, as an art work, a cultural object does not signify anymore. The anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss once explained the development of the Western art concept in three steps of desemantisation. The medieval altarpiece tells a story through symbolism. There is still a code, like in language, that everyone in the church understands. Since the Renaissance, the coded symbolism has been slowly replaced by representations of perceived reality, the code replaced by analogy, which is no more a language determined by conventions. Analogy is determined by physical parameters. Finally, an abstract art work no longer denotes anything, but is rather related to the art context from where it draws some kind of non-denotable meaning. Because the context has changed, the art work gets another meaning. What we can conclude in relation to our subject is that there must be some transcultural potential in the art institution, already present in its process of birth.

Let's now come back to our two discourses: the A-discourse wants to establish a dialogue between cultures. But what kind of dialogue can this possibly be, if there is no language? What such a dialogue could be, struck me at the exhibition Magiciens de la Terre. One of the most spectacular aspects of the exhibition was a huge black wall, maybe twenty meters high, with in its centre a huge circle of mud done by Richard Long. In front of it was a mud painting by Aborigines. As a Western spectator I conclude that there is a dialogue which can be resumed to mud. I can explain from art history how Richard Long came to that use of the material, but as I do not know the cultural context of the Aborigines, I am left alone with guesses about possible meanings of the emphasis put

on the material by the curators of the show through the juxtaposition. Thus there is a serious problem with establishing such dialogues. Such visible things need some kind of conventional framework in order to be meaningful.

The B-discourse, on the other hand, notoriously raises the question of the theft, by the Western avant-gardes, of essential ideas in the development of modernism from primitive cultures, so why should non-Western artists not steal from Western artists? But this is a bit short, Africans did not invent cubism. I believe that, if non-Western artists steal from Western art history and thrive for being presented within the context of Western art institutions, they cannot avoid a contradiction to criteria they themselves tend to herald, the criteria of originality and individual invention, for instance.

Decontextualisation always alters meaning and I think no dialogue without any conventional framework is possible. Conventional frameworks exist in politics, economy, science, technology. In art, it is not sure whether they exist or not, not in the least because many different interpretations of the word 'art' are hovering around - again: 'anything goes'. There are museums now in Asia and in the Middle East and maybe a dialogue within the framework of the art institutions is possible. The alternative, and here I come to another version of the binary problem, is the encroaching world culture, called modernism, which manifests itself, in cultural terms, as mass culture, industrial culture, reproducible culture. The great danger of this constellation, dominated by the rationale of economic strategy is that it tends to marginalize everything that cannot be industrialized. It does not foresee per se a space for irrationality, spirituality, individual invention and creativity, human beings, I believe, need something like that. I myself, working in an institution, experience regularly that it is becoming increasingly difficult to defend room for that kind of exchange because it does not enter the rationales of this liberal international society. We have a good example of the disastrous effects of a pure economic approach to art - I remind you of the eighties. When economic logic is applied to artistic production, art flattens in the same way as media culture does. Economy needs predictability, reproduction and planning, which can be

disastrous for creativity. We saw how quickly a planned art market broke down. Art and market are ultimately incompatible. And here we come back to the quality problem which is subsumed in both discourses.

What is quality? Both discourses seem to assume that there exists something like objective quality, and both discourses seem to locate it in the West. Closer scrutiny reveals easily though, that an objective quality measure is far less obvious than it seems at first hand. If we talk about contemporary art, even highly specialized people do not agree at all about the quality of an art work or an artist. One director will throw an art work in the trashcan while another will put it in a central position of his museum. This means there is no real objective measure. A broader agreement on the quality and the importance of an artist establishes itself, if at all, after some time. Such a test of time is made possible through art institutions, which collect and preserve objects that are regarded as art works according to the conventions of their time. Maybe the next generation will not like certain works at all - and those works, then, will remain in storage. Maybe the ensuing generation will take the works out of storage and realize: that is it, this is the most representative work of the nineties. The test of time cannot be accomplished by the market. The market is not interested in the falling value of an art work they sold years ago for a good price. Its logic allows for selling worthless kitsch, if there is someone to pay a high price for it. The test of time might be one of the crucial arguments in favour of the art institution in spite of the many attacks that it has suffered and still suffers from the side of the avant-garde. As I said: there is a tragic link between creation, which wants to embrace the world, and preservation which takes the work out of that whole process. But preservation is the only way for an art work to achieve some reliable broad acceptance. Everything else is mere power play: the likely world top of contemporary art is the top to a sufficiently large and powerful group. The majority of culturally interested people might not even have heard of Judd, Kounellis, Baselitz et cetera and the following generation might forget altogether about the one or the other.

Coming back to our subject, I believe that institutions need to be implanted in particular cultural contexts. The museum is a European invention and it is still the West that sets the standards. There should be museums all over the world where a lively dialogue between the public and the art is going on and some kind of a national version of contemporary art can be discussed, seen and studied. Thus the binary I talked about before, might come to a third term: national versions of contemporary art would neither need to be ethnic, nor would they need to be derived from Western art, rather they would be something in between. They would pick up fragments of rests of their own cultural history or from other cultures as the art did in Western art history, and they would make something completely new out of it within the framework of the art concept, which, by then, would have transformed into a global variation of its European antecedent.

I just might conclude referring to the art exhibition 'Rhizome', a term employed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari as a model for thinking which they locate in the East, but which might also be appropriate to describe the artistic way of thinking. The subtitle of the exhibition was 'A European Art Exhibition', and under it appeared all the artists' names like Anish Kapoor, Iba Ndiaye, Hidetoshi Nagasawa, Shirazeh Houshiary et cetera, names that do not sound European at all. The idea was to develop a binary which was based on historical grounds, but which no longer is an actual binary, a binary between cultural regions, based on the criterium whether or not a region did develop art institutions, separate from normal day life or from religious cults, like India, Africa, Japan, Iran, China and so on. There were also Japanese artists; so it was not about a question of binary between First and Third world. The binary was structural: The artists came from countries that did not develop an art institution, a separate sphere for art on their own but rather imported the concept of art. The second criterium was that they lived and worked in Europe, having feet in both camps, so to speak. Something of their origins was present in their work, although their work was not reduced to that.

I had interviews with the artists about their experience of being an artist in the West. It happened that we had three generations. The eldest artist was a 65 year old African painter who has lived in Paris

since 1948. He had great difficulties when he went back to Senegal in 1960, when the country became independent, in order to establish an art school in Dakar - according to the French model of course - and he encountered one of those terrible cliches that are hovering around in this multi-culti discussion: black people are supposed to be natural people and ought not to be spoiled by too much education. He had already experienced twelve years in Paris, where he had gone to learn about painting because there were no Rembrandts and Titians in the African museums. Through his experience, he believed, he could contribute to this art school. Instead, he met such terrible opposition that after six years he went back to Paris.

The youngest participant was a 22 year old Chinese painter who had propaganda painting lessons in his Chinese grammar school. He came to the West and just continued working in the same idiom, social realism, but reduced to black and white in order to make it more abstract. He makes fun of it, saying 'they take me for a traditionalist and want me to be a conceptualist, but I am just painting'. His relation to his new surroundings was more ironic. Discovering this discrepancy with respect to the problems of acculturation across three generations of artists gave me some hope. I thought, something has changed and there is some potential that can develop further.

I wanted to make clear today that we have to beware of one thing, we have to prevent this whole discussion about the integration of cultures to lead to an abandonment of the art institution. The art institution is the only space where art can have some kind of dialogue on a more sophisticated level than cultural industry, although it might not be a linguistic dialogue. Instead of getting stuck in binary power relations between the West and the non-West, integration of cultures could rather turn into a process of mutual enrichment. Without an art institution, integration necessarily will be reduced to the level of the lowest common denominator. Residues of high cultures will be absorbed by multi media culture, which is already globally the same, and it will be more and more difficult to have room and a place for an encounter on a more spiritual level.

Franz Kaiser is an art historian. He is Director of exhibitions at the 'Gemeentemuseum' in the Hague.

10

DISCUSSION WITH

Franz Kaiser and Gilane Tawadros

> Franz Kaiser:

There are two things that struck me in Gilanes lecture, first this interpretation of Mondrian as almost a metaphor fot mapping the wotld which is basically putting the idea of ethnocentricity into other words. The West sees itself as the centre of the world and the othet is only 'the other' compared to us. This ethnocentricity problem I have encounterd in the discussions is a block because it is so value loaded. But in fact it is quite a normal thing. Only the link between cultures, the spread of modernism, makes ethnocentricity a heavy ptoblem in the multicultural discussion.

This btings me to a second point, the question of otherness. Otherness is a good example of the possibility to bring us out of this dilemma of, on the one hand, wanting to address the other and, on the other hand, not finding the right words or attitude. I think if we approach this problem, not in a binary way but in a structural way, as did the structuralists almost thirty years ago, this could help us to go around this block. What do we have in common? Where ethnocentricity and other attitudes are concerned, basically human beings are not that different. We have to leave the traditional cultural definitions to find new ones. Ethnocentricity is required to understand anything. To understand something it is necessary to relate it to things you ate

familiat with, things you already know. So ethnocentricity is a natural thing in the theory of perception. If we look at it from this sttucturalistic point of view, we might know better how to deal with it.

> Gilane Tawadros:

Fitst of all, ethnocentricity is your term, not mine. I never use the term because I do not know if I really understand what it means. But I am also confused because I hear you talking about contextualising and the implications of decontextualisation and it seems to me a contradiction to what you said about my lecture. What I was talking about in telation to Mondrian was a very specific moment in time, a very specific artist, a very specific work and a very specific relationship between attistic ptactice and a set of political and economic impetatives. It seems to me that culture cannot be discussed as dissociated in that way. I do not know how other cultures respond. All I can talk about is the culture I am in at the moment. I can only talk from this position that I am sitting here and when you talk about cultural ethnocentricity, it seems to me there is assumed a share of communalities within that cultural too, whatever that culture is. Ethnocentricity implies that thete is a culture which is at the centre. But it also assumes that everybody in that culture shares a set of meanings and

understanding, and I do not believe that is true. But the world culture conceals all visions and assumptions already. I do not see it as a set of binaries between the West and the non-West but the actual critical problem here is precisely that. That those people who come from different backgrounds within the very heart of the West are perceived as others, as from somewhere else. They are not; they are from here, they are Dutch, British, French.

Our cultures go through a process of political and economic movements and events which lie beyond the control of many of us in this room, they resist in the past or they continue very much in the present, and have dictated an exchange of dialogue which has been going on for years. What these sort of discussions are about ultimately is an attempt to come to grips with political, economic and social changes which have already happened, which have a history. So I think this issue about the transcultural potential of the art institutions, I think transcultural movements have a history already which has happened outside the institutions. Institutions, and I include mine within that, are very backward. They intend to follow history rather than to make it.

> Franz Kaiser:
Just to make the point of ethnocentricity clear, I use this term because that it is a term you find in ethnological research on tribes and which you find as the most common denominator of all kinds of cultures. It is true that exchanges are going on and have a history and that the art institutions are backward, I agree.

> Gilane Tawadros:
I suppose that what might help us is that we carry out an ideology-critique on ourselves, the problem is that ethnography and anthropology have always been projected outwards. What is needed now is an archaeologic dig in our own backyard.

> Chris Dercon:
I have three questions. The first one is adressed to Franz Kaiser willing to apply that concept of decontextualisation also to so called Western art? I believe that the work 'Oktober' from Richter exposed in New York is not an important work anymore because it has been decontextualised.

The second question is to Gilane, I think there is a danger in world cinema and world music because of mapping. For instance the Rotterdam Film Festival program is done through mapping. They go to Uzbekistan, Burkina Fasso and Equador to find films. They are only interested in a geographical periphery and not in a mental periphery. The same holds for world music, there is no progress anymore, no thinking about processes only about procedures. So do you think the same is true for visual arts?

The third question for both of you is about the literary models for exhibitions and symposia and so on. Is it an alibi for the perception of the binary and opposition?

> Franz Kaiser:
I use the term decontextualisation in a specific way as related to language, that a work of art is a kind of language that is completely interwoven in the whole context and it only gets its meaning within that context. The decontextualising effect I would interpret as an effect brought about by the art institution. That was made to decontextualise. This process took place for hundreds of years and resulted in the museum. When Richter is sold to another museum, it is not really a matter of decontextualisation. His work was made for and sold to a museum and the history can easily be reconstructed. It was only moved from the German context to the American but it is still in the art institution. Americans who bought the work know the situation in Germany, so the meaning has not changed at all.

> Gilane Tawadros:
Yes, you are right about the geographic issue. But I never used the term periphery either. One important thing is, the institution has made a point of not dealing, we are approached daily to collaborate in projects which are based on categories of race and nation. That is not to say that race and nation do not emerge within the work and within the projects that we are engaged in but they are not the defining criteria. The criteria emerge from the work and the

writings that the critics are producing, they do not come from an extraneous theme which is then imposed on the work or categories which by and large have no meaning. I agree we are obsessed with geography and it is precisely the over-determination of geography above the actual ideas and contents of cultural production which is the biggest problem here. I would introduce the term 'commodification'. I think this is about finding a new cultural product flag. In London I was talking about the Africa '95 festival. Africa is being wrapped up and delivered on a plateau to the heart of England. There will be an exhibition in the Royal Academy of Arts in a few weeks time of African art from a million years B.C. to the present day. If I propose an exhibition of European art over that period, they will certainly put me in a lunatic home and never let me out.

> Franz Kaiser:

The theme Rhizome is not an alibi. It is stressing that we have things in common. It comes from the 'natural way of thinking' from Deleuze and Guattari which they locate more in the East than in the West and oppose it to the model of the tree with branches of Descartes. They used it as a metaphor to address the problem of art in the world. On the one hand Deleuze and Guattari locate this image in the East, on the other hand, in the West in the realm of art. In the West, the art world is the only area where this 'rhizomic' thought can be found. Deleuze and Guattari use it as a model or an image and I did that in the same way. I did not understand it as an alibi. The problem with Rhizome was that it was too much European, remember the subtitle 'a European art exhibition' and the joke was the names of the artist not being European at all, this was too subtle for the press, they did not get the point.

> Gilane Tawadros:

About the question of literary motives I agree that the linguistic is overly determined. Two things need to be said. One is that Britain and the Netherlands are primarily literary cultures. We are much more comfortable with words than with images but the interesting thing is that the concept of maps is a visual concept and that they mediate lived experience through two dimensional visual means, by interpretation and re-interpretation, three dimensional concepts like space and time. I think we have to find other ways but that we shall always need a point of reference to engage with the visual.

> Franz Kaiser:

There are very successful artists who base their work much more on the signifier perception than on a literary model or significance, producing meaning, context, identity.

> Heinz Kimmerle:

My question is about fixed positions of intercultural philosophers as well as intercultural artists or those who make intercultural exhibitions. It takes time to come to an intercultural dialogue on interculturalism. How can we avoid that European is regarded as universal? Art is a European concept, the word comes from the Latin language, philosophy is a Greek word and we just enter the intercultural scene with these kinds of Western words. Trying to start a dialogue and listening to what the others say, we present these words as a platform to meet the others, as a gift - in the two meanings - and it is very difficult to avoid giving more than we intend to give. The same thing holds for the terms human rights or democracy. These were Western concepts and now they are regarded as universal.

> Franz Kaiser:

It is a moral problem and we can only deal with these notions, these concepts, when we try to use them in the most value-free way possible. I think we already can observe that these initial European concepts have become heavily transformed by truly becoming international. I am aware of that because this whole discourse was based on modernity, which is a European 18th century concept of modernity, and in the art world you have to deal with criticism which is very much influenced by American art criticism, and there, modernity starts in this century. A whole part of modernity is swept out. I think Europe is no longer in the colonial power

position as it has been, America is in power now. I believe that what the American art centre people focus on in the Western art world will also eclipse as a centre in the neat future. What will be the next centre or will there be a centre at all? The value attachment is a moral problem and is linked to power and Europe is just one part of the world.

> Gilane Tawadros:

I think the issue raised by Heinz Kimmerle is very important. I do not know about abandoning philosophy, human rights, democracy. I think they are very good ideas. It is a shame that we cannot get it right. I give you an example, I was walking with a Cuban colleague around a gallery which had an exhibition on German romantic art. He, to my surprise, was dismissing knowingly a number of some less famous nineteenth-century artists: 'Oh yes we studied him in Havana and him and so on.' He was perfectly familiar with the philosophical artistic, political concepts and examples that European thought had to offer. I am ashamed to say that I was less familiar with examples of artistic, political, social thought of Cuba, let alone Latin America. And I think the reason that brings those non-Western philosophers and art historians to the table to discuss these ideas, is just to reveal our failure to engage sufficiently in order to establish a dialogue with works cross concepts. I think we should abandon that notion of universality as a lie. It is an impossibility, a lie, it is fiction.

> Ria Lavrijsen:

I want to come back to what Chris Dercon was saying about the film and music festivals. What we see in European culture now is that all kinds of art organisations that want to engage in this debate of cultural diversity and multiculturalism find it a rather exotic thing and that we tend to enter into a kind of uncritical indifferent cultural relativism. That is not very helpful for a truly intelligent debate on what it actually means to live and to make art works in a heterogenous European culture.

> Chris Dercon:

I would like to ask if Sarat Maharaj could say something about this?

> Sarat Maharaj:

The problem of the visual and visuality is very difficult. There has been in 20th century art a strong tendency towards conceptualism, interpreted in the post war period as textualism and that the image has been textualised, certainly in the areas that we have been looking at, in the debates about identities and so on. The subject lends itself to textualisations so that the world becomes appendages to a textual discourse. It might be that at the end of the 20th century we will see that was a phase in the history of art and art practice. The kind of acknowledgement again that there is a logic to the visual which has to be accounted for. The minute that they become aware that art has been too conceptualised and theorised, given too much of the discursive form, practicians themselves quietly descend by trying out something else. We know that and thank goodness for it, visual art practicians always do exactly what we do not expect them to do. They therefore elude the net of the conceptual and theoretical and it is within that movement between the logic of the visual of its own and the visual conceptualised and theorised, we have to think practice today.

INTEGRATION
POLICY IN HETEROGENOUS
GERMAN CITIES

Helga Trüper

In this contribution, I want to present some information about the actual situation of migrants and integration policy in Germany today and especially about what my ex-ministry did in the last four years.

By the time of the unification, in 1990, West-Germany already saw the third generation of immigrants growing up in its kindergartens and schools. They were descendants of the so called 'guest workers', labour migrants from Italy, Spain, Portugal, former Yugoslavia and above all Turkey. Of the two types of labour migrants known, the ones that are encouraged to actually immigrate and settle down with their families in the host country, and the ones that are carefully kept in the seasonal or temporary status, labour migrants in Germany were always legally treated like the latter, but inevitably developed to become the former, a genuine immigrant community.

This is one of the main dilemmas of Germany's post war immigration policy: Up to seven million people living like long term immigrants with their families, now raising a third generation on German soil, are at the same time treated under a law that largely denies them immigrant status and still threatens them with repatriation. The above mentioned 'basic consensus of the democrats' relishes the slogan 'we invited workers, and human beings came'. Unfortunately, hardly any politician or government so far had the clout to consequently translate this headline into legal action. Therefore, today we - or

should I say, the immigrants - still suffer from the fact that even long term residents do not possess undeniable legal status as citizens and are largely kept away from naturalization through restrictive laws and a myriad of red tape. So, notwithstanding the fact that these immigrants - even after naturalization - would still be an ethnic minority, the law consequently denies most of them the chance to leave the legal 'minority' status, integrate into German society and become 'ordinary' German citizens of foreign origin. Regarding the very core of the problem, one could say that Germany's laws are deliberately 'producing' the foreign minorities who are later attacked by its right-wing activists and street gangs.

However, the lack of liberal immigration and naturalization laws is only part of the problem. Nobody can close his or her eyes to see the difference between the roughly 17.000 or so refugees and asylum seekers who knocked at the doors in all of Western Europe in 1970 and the millions from all over the world who in the '90s are trying to reach the safe havens of Europe and the United States. Germany, with its right to asylum for those politically persecuted in their home country, originally laid down in the constitution, without doubt had to cope with the lion's share of refugees. Germany so far has taken roughly 400.000 refugees from the war zones of former Yugoslavia, more

than double the figure that were accepted in all of Western Europe together. And, until June 1993, when asylum laws were radically changed, growth rates for asylum applications since the late '80s remained in the double digits.

For a while, local authorities tried to cope with the influx of refugees by accommodating them in guest houses, sport arenas, tents, bunkers and other public facilities. Welfare hand-outs, health care and logistics cut deep into the - already sparsely filled - communal pockets. A financial agreement between federal, state and local level government, steering all parts of the administration through this emergency, could not be settled. Thus, right wing resentment against foreigners, sported by old fashioned nationalists and nazis and the emerging street gang violence of skinheads, more and more won the sympathy of 'ordinary' local residents, believing they were watching their bread and butter being eaten by those with whom they felt they had nothing in common, and should have nothing to do with.

The widening gap between the 'basic consensus of the democrats' and the views and daily practice of the people became obvious when in the late '80s, right wing extremist parties started to win seats in local, regional and state elections. Although hopelessly lost, facing the subtle requirements of parliamentary politics, the heirs of Hitlerism could now feed their propaganda machines with fresh money the German legislative systems awards its parties for each vote won in any election. But also members of the big democratic parties, especially those responsible on the local level, from the late '80s on, increasingly started to call for a limitation of the number of refugees. Local politicians largely left the search for ways and means to meet this objective to the inspiration of political planners at party headquarters and the federal parliament. You might easily agree with me that the public discussions about refugee quota, as justified as it might have been in the eyes of a desperate City Ways and Means Committee, was hardly able to temper the xenophobic mood of the time. Consequently, together with the unforeseeable effects of German unification, which I will discuss now, the wave of anti-foreigner violence has not yet been stopped.

In the former East Germany, neo-nazi violence claimed less victims than the fire-bombing of Turkish houses in the West, but emotional anti-foreigner resentment - according to polls - is endemic even in the upper echelons of the administration: the courts and the police. This is all the more shocking, because East Germany is almost foreigner-free. New, reliable statistical reports show the number of non-Germans in the East to be less than one percent of the total population. The limited number of contract workers and students from socialist 'sister' nations like Vietnam, Angola and Cuba has even fallen since unification because working permits have been running out and many of these workers left the country voluntarily. In the absence of a genuine immigrant community, those who stayed together with a small number of refugees, whom the East had to accommodate after unification, are the only foreigners in an all German society. Even big cities like Leipzig or Dresden show a 99 percent ethnic homogeneity not known in the rest of Europe.

This racism, without ethnic minorities in the East, very well argues against the selfish, economically motivated new xenophobia: those who do not even live in your home town can hardly take away your jobs, apartments or your daughters. We will have to come back to this argument, if we are discussing the shortcomings of the pro-immigrant campaigns. For the 'New Lander' however, we will have to look for more plausible reasons for xenophobia. One certainly lies in the history of the country. Cut off from any foreign relations except with the Soviet Block, people in East Germany seem to have lived on an island. With the contract workers and students being accommodated in special compounds, Easterners never got the chance to get used to a multi-cultural society. In addition, they were not allowed to travel but to a few socialist countries. In retrospect, official state run campaigns of 'international solidarity' for far-away revolutionary movements seem not to have touched the hearts of the citizens as state-run campaigns genuinely seem to fall short of their objective, wherever launched and whoever was launching them.

Germany, almost unnoticed by the public, changed its ethnic face dramatically in the '80s and '90s. The dichotomy of the '60s and '70s, when a homogenous German society had to accommodate a largely young, male, blue collar community from the

Mediterranean region, gave way to a Babylonian mix of refugees, asylum seekers coming from all parts of the world, the labour migrants' families and off-spring, and people listed in the statistics under 'miscellaneous'. Quantitatively, the non-Germans' share of the total population grew from 1.2 percent in 1960 to 8.0 percent in 1992. Consequently, immigration and integration policy long dominated by crude social care programmes for workers, implemented through the churches, the labour unions, or non-profit organisations, lost its momentum. Concerning the 'ideological' discussion, the old battle between 'pro- and anti-foreigner forces' lost its fascination. Nowadays, those in charge of immigration policy and multicultural affairs have to deal with a complex situation of intercultural and cross-cultural conflicts.

The Islamic community in Bremen, comparatively strong, due to the influx of Turkish, Iranian, Arabs and Muslims from the Middle East, successfully sued the state school authorities for exempting Islamic girls from sports classes, whenever the principle of co-education is applied. After appealing to the Supreme Court in vain, the school authorities had to change their curriculum and organisation. The more serious problem, however, lies in the fact that teachers are no longer in a position to keep the drifting minorities together in their classes and school camps. Festivals and other extra-curricular activities almost cease to be organized in multi-racial neighbourhoods because a common ground on what to eat, where to go and how to behave can no longer be found in classes with ten or more different minorities. In addition, German parents start to grumble and threaten politicians with protest votes for right wing candidates. Organising round tables with more or less fundamentalist Islamic representatives, their compatriots from other political or religious ways of life, head-masters, teachers and the public finally leaves the difficult task of moderation and looking for compromise to four department. Solutions are found but on a case to case basis and success, if their is any, is temporary. Main stream politicians, on the other hand, try to avoid the issue as far as they can, feeling that - given the shape of their German constituency - they can do nothing but loose votes with the subject. A brand new judgement in Southern Germany has now exempted an Islamic girl from

attending sports classes completely, whether given together with boys or not.

I am not going to bore you with details of other examples like the on-going fight between Turkish and Kurdish residents, or about them joining ranks against the German police, or the long term immigrants joining right-wing protesters against liberal asylum regulations. All I wanted to show is that the structural heterogeneity of the new immigrant community in Germany is requiring a far more complex legislation and politics, and a lot more personal and financial resources than have been provided so far.

On a philosophical level, practical day to day problems of the multi-cultural society lend themselves to discussions about a universally acceptable common ground and the question of diversity. German intellectuals, so far, have little to say about the question. Still this is one of the nasty consequences of not considering ourselves an immigration country. But with growing violence on the streets and with the cultural differences becoming yet more visible in daily life, intellectual debate started to pick up. Jürgen Habermas, for example, wrote an article about the German translation of Charles Taylor's Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition. However, it is by no means clear, how the process of finding a minimum common ground of basic values for all different ethnic, cultural and religious groups shall be started. And it is even less foreseeable what cure for the 'Disuniting Germany', if I may adapt Schlesinger's outstanding book on Germany, will be found and how much diversity the German society will be able to accommodate.

If the new complexity, or Neue Unübersichtlichkeit as Jürgen Habermas consequently called the intellectual state of the art of the German society in a previous book, is true for the ethnic and cultural mix, it must as well be applied to the phenomena of neo-racism and xenophobia. The global media, after being comparatively soft in the early '90s when racist violence was first staged loud and clear by German neo-Nazis, nowadays react with growing anger and fear. Blacks and Turks being driven through the East German City of Magdeburg by hordes of skinheads and racist, youth too closely recalled the scenario of the 1930s when SA

militia went after jews, dissidents and other minorities. 'Bonn is not Weimar', you might have heard this sentence often as an answer. My personal opinion is: the sentence is both true and inadequate. Inadequate because neither does it explain the phenomenon the outside world is so scared of, nor does it show a way to effectively combat racism and new nationalism in Germany.

From my own experience and from what is available in new empirical studies, polls and essays, it can be concluded that anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia in contemporary Germany are by no means confined to the core neo-Nazi groups visible on television. Resentment, fear of personal economic and social decline, and disappointment with the perceived coldness of a liberal society that just does not care enough, is turned against minorities of all kinds. Not only the socially and mentally deprived persons who fill the rank and file of the neo-Nazis, also parts of the Mittelstand relish some hidden sympathy for the anti-foreigner movement. Evidence from a series of long term sociological and psychological studies of people who attacked refugee compounds, shows that the attackers were neither financially deprived or jobless, nor were they from marginal groups in their respective home towns. Violence literally came out of the centre of society and apparently was little sanctioned by parents, neighbours or colleagues. On a more theoretical battleground, German society, particularly the law profession, was shocked to hear about post-mortem revelations that a - if not the - outstanding German law professor Theodor Maunz, who delivered the globally accepted interpretation of the Grundgesetz, served as the long term advisor to one of the country's nastiest extremist parties of the right, the Deutsche Volks Union (DVU).

On the other hand, the majority of Germans cannot be described as being xenophobic. Again, it might not only be the visible part of the movement marching against racism and violence on the street that counts. In Bremen, a wide range of grassroots and neighbourhood groups with roots in the churches, the democratic parties, the unions, in the schools and even kindergartens sprung up and responded to the extremist challenge. In many big cities hundreds of thousands took part in torchlight processions against violence. And, concerning the so called silent majority, this year's elections so far ended

with an over 95 percent turn-out for the democratic parties. Sure, these votes cannot schematically be taken as a pro-immigrant position, since voters tend to make compromises and decide on a day to day basis.

However, a neo-Nazi resurgence in German parliaments has been avoided so far, and in my opinion will remain minimal in the future. From today's point of view, the chance for right-wingers or neo-Fascists to win more than a few seats, as is the case in Italy, is almost nil.

If we accept this mixed picture, for the question of how to fight the new nationalism better than in the past, there is no easy answer. In the German debate some argue for new laws against racist violence. Others are periodically throwing at the public a proliferation of flyers, posters, readers and video spots. None of this is wrong. But according to polls, the impact of traditional means of political education remains vague. Sometimes even reactions have been observed, where disgusted students turned against teachers who constantly tried to 'harass' them with 'boring' and 'politically correct'
material.

I would now like to discuss political and practical steps to be taken to shape the immigration process in Germany, with some examples for anti-racist programmes launched by our ministry. It is obvious that I can only talk about some outstanding examples, which I believe are bound to bring some fresh air into the debate in Germany. A wide range of daily practical programmes with and for the ethnic and religious minorities, and to fight racism, unfortunately have to go unmentioned and with it the enthusiasm of both volunteers and professionals.

The overriding objective of anti-racist programmes is getting the discussion back to 'ordinary' people. In the wake of the 1968 student movement, the last two and a half decades in Germany have been shaped by high-flying ideological and intellectual debates. While this has had genuinely positive effects on fundamentally reforming the conservative post-war society and is still echoed in the sciences, the arts and lifestyles, it also resulted in a growing distance between political or educational concepts and 'real life'. To bridge this gap, we try to be physically present where the day to day

struggle between resentment and tolerance takes place.

For that purpose we are running a mobile information unit which can easily be sent to any place in the city. A series of town hall meetings in the most affected neighbourhoods aims to listen to the concerns of the people and to explain our immigration policy to them. In addition, we are going to install a hot line, serving as primary partner for immigrants and refugees in need of assistance and simultaneously as an early warning system for emerging inter-cultural conflicts. However, I have been envious, I must confess, when on my last trip to the United States, I happened to see the Boston Globe on May the 23th issuing a special edition with a guide to local services for new immigrants translated in eight languages. This still symbolizes the difference between a country which officially sees itself as a receptive country for immigrants and Germany which even today after thirty years of de facto immigration still takes a time-out to decide.

Also from the US, we imported the 'A World of Difference Programme' created by the 'Anti-Discrimination League'. In the programme, that has successfully been run in many American cities, participants are not told what to think and what to believe like in many traditional re-education programmes. It rather concentrates on awareness-building and empowerment of the individuals to recognize, accept and later overcome their own prejudices against ethnic or religious minorities. After some scepticism at the outset, of which I do hope they did not have much to do with the ADL being a Jewish organisation, the programme is now an integral part of the teachers re-training and refresher courses. It will be integrated into the basic vocational training for public servants, working for the police, at immigration offices and the like.

In the attempt to respond to the new challenge, the State of Bremen is also seeking new ways in building scientific capacities in migration studies and multiculturalism. The fact that immigration and its consequences have been pushed aside by German society for so long, left the universities almost void of internationally accepted research in this field. True, there is some reception of the theoretical work of Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer, or Henry Louis Gates Jr. and our own people start thinking about the meaning of universalism and particularism for shaping

a multicultural society on German soil. There are also few historically oriented studies on the consequences of migration for the German economy and society. However, we as politicians in contemporary Germany, if we disregard the proliferation of morally and 'politically correct' resolutions for the moment, have been left alone with what from now on I would like to call 'Immigration Assessment'. Maybe we need a German Henry Louis Gates Jr. who teaches us a lesson about humanism, 'about the promise of a shared humanity, where we ask what we have in common, while acknowledging our diversity'.

Beyond practical assistance for immigrants and the moderation of inter-cultural conflicts, the role of our new department in Bremen is to stimulate and control any action that will be taken by other ministries and authorities in the state affecting foreigners and ethnic minorities. On the one hand this makes us dependent on the goodwill and readiness of the other branches of government to accept immigrants' interests. On the other hand it gives us enormous lee-way for a cross-sectional view to prepare political and public action. We have asked our cultural institutions to integrate multicultural aspects into their programmes and projects. The centre of adult education had a lot of programmes concerning learning German, lessons in islamic religion and meetings of German and non-German housewives, German and non-German elder persons.

The theatre started to perform acts in Turkish and with actors from different countries.

Our general orientation was to build our migration policy on human rights and universalism. On the other hand, we try to leave lee-way for cultural diversity, different cultural tradition, languages, religions, beliefs, ways of life and lifestyles.

We supported exhibitions of German and non-German artists, multi-cultural weeks in different parts of the city, a lot of possibilities to get to know each other, sport events with German and non-German young people, in the hope that there will be no violence between them.

Helga Trüpel was senator for the 'Grünen' of Culture and Integration of foreigners in the State of Bremen.

12

POWER STRUCTURES
IN INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUES

Berndt Michael Scherer

UNIVERSAL ECONOMISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY: ON THE PREREQUISITES FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUES

The debate on and the imaging of the other is currently registering a boom. Phases of a boom are not always the most appropriate perspectives for a clear and sober look at a given situation. It is obvious that the conflict with the 'South' is growing at a time when the Eastern countermodel has been rendered obsolete by history, in the process of which the dividing line (between East and West) has been as good as obliterated. And with the disappearance of the opponents, the selfunderstanding of Western societies becomes more and more diffuse.

Until the end of the '80's and despite the freedom and ecology movements, the Western selfunderstanding was dominated by a belief in progress, rooted in the Enlightenment. Its central focus was the enfoldment of the individual, and the goal to strive for a world-society. The nation-states which already had universal values enshrined in their constitution, appeared to be just an intermediate phase. The success story of the North has thereby been essentially based on economics. It would be too facile to explain this success in terms of performance and knowhow. Rather, it should be recognised that the basis for economic progress of capitalistic societies is the premise that societal action by and large is geared to economic action. The economic paradigm is steadily developing into a fundamental meaning system by which we judge and evaluate our actions. Entire branches of life are literally being economised. Works of art make a mark not on account of their innovative aesthetic or critical potential, but because of their market potential. Churches can no longer count on being the instance that provides alternatives to those in search of meaning but take recourse to marketing strategies. At the same time, the globalisation of societies brought under the yoke of economics is on the march, revealing its negative implications more and more:

Islands of prosperity are on the increase in the South; at the same time, the majority of the population is kept out of the 'benefits' of development.

If India has a middle class of 200 million people, in economic terms: a consumer-class, there is also a class of 600 million who do not even figure as elements of economic calculation.

In the North, an impoverishment of more and more sections of the middle class is becoming visible. The social systems exhibit big lacunae the state can no longer fill; nor have they given rise to well analyzed, informal alternative structures until now.

The economisation has resulted in an increasing erosion of state power, in the North as well as the South. Governments can no longer control many of the innerstate processes, even if they want to.

In other words, while the economisation threatens or even destroys traditional value systems and robs the traditional political actors, the nation-states, of their power, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is a boom only for a few. As a consequence, the belief in universal Reason unfolding itself in forms of economy is gradually giving way to a scepticism and identity crisis, going back to the Romantic tradition of Western thinking. The idea of individuals living in a world-community and developing themselves in a free market economy is yielding place to a concept of cultures in conflict. Not individuals as carriers of a universal Reason and as economic actors are at the centre, but seemingly 'natural' communities, which are supposed to compensate the loss of identity.

DIALOGUE AND POWER: ON THE ASYMMETRIES OF INTERCULTURAL DISCOURSES

The dialogue between cultures and especially between North and South takes on a special significance in this situation. Just as in the case of manipulation of economic processes through Northern media concerns and financial institutions, the discourse and cooperation too, run the risk of being functionalised in order to maintain the status quo of the power equation. As the so called 'Empire writes back movement' has shown, power structures and asymmetries determine not only the eco-political but also the intellectual and artistic discourses. In a number of cases, seemingly self-critical and progressive critiques of the North have turned out to be particularly subtle methods to perpetuate old asymmetries. Such asymmetries, as Salman Rushdie reveals in his volume of essays Imaginary Homelands, can hide behind an unobtrusive nomenclature like 'Commonwealth literature'. The British namely do not consider their own literature under this category. While all other literature is thrown into this one basket, the hallowed and holy English literature is exempted from it. Besides, the categorisation gives rise to the impression as if the centre has created these genres and robs the periphery thereby - in this case India - of the opportunity to see the development of the English language as its own. These asymmetries of power mark a number of discourses and processes of exchange between North and South.

I would like to give a few examples,

some of which have been discussed within the framework of our programmes at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

Example 1: Developmental cooperation
Developmental cooperation has so far been based on the premise that the North can offer a viable model or at least the necessary knowhow, to solve the problems of the South. Whoever heard of an expert from India coming to Germany within the framework of developmental cooperation? (Interestingly enough, this kind of exchange exists among priests). And until today, it is the North that sets the rules of the game for the so called cooperation.

Three illustrations:
a) State and society
For a long time the state has been considered as the main contact partner, disregarding the fact that state power in many Southern states caters to vested interests in society, thereby safeguarding the power position of a corrupt elite.
b) Endmeans relationship
Social and cultural aspects of the so called cooperation were often only pro forma part of a larger sociocultural technological package. The point is not really an understanding of the other but a functionalisation of social and cultural factors, mechanised in the spirit of a technological project. The other is objectified, is not subject to this development. There is a peculiar reversal of the endmeans relationship that takes place. Development, which is at best a means, is declared the goal, while cultural systems of meaning acquire the dimension of means.
c) Modern science and technology are always future oriented. Their concerns are not an understanding of societal processes, but projection and change ('Make the earth your subject'). This collides in the process with knowledge of action accumulated through history that in a way wants to maintain status quo in the sense of a flexible balance. Rigidly rooted in its claims to universalism, it fails to comprehend a knowledge system that has grown out of a practical and integrated scheme of action and is part of a locally anchored world view and world version. (For example, a world view, in which processes of nature are seen and understood entirely analogous to human relationships.)

Example 2: The ecology debate

In the case of ecology debates, Indian ecologists and intellectuals for example castigate the strategy of North dominated institutions such as World Bank and IMF which coopt the language of local environmental groups, in order to globalise local Northern interests. (Vandana Shiva: "*Some are more global than others*". In: Wolfgang Sachs: "*The planet as patient*". On the contradictions of global environmental politics. Birkhäuser Verlag. Berlin, Basel, Boston 1994, pages 173183)

In discussions on the damage to the ozone layer, the buyers of refrigerators in India and China are made out to be the cause of the problem, in order to justify global strategies of resistance. Instead of sanctions against the Northern manufactures, the North works out strategies of solution and regulations in the name of globality of the problem. As a result of which it creates for itself large slices of the market by means of technology transfer in the form of patentrights for CFC substitutes.

Example 3: Human rights discussion

Even in the defence of universal human rights through Northern governments, a strategy of concerted influencing on the part the North is discernible. Not only the totalitarian regimes of the South see it this way, but also a number of important intellectuals elsewhere. Too long have totalitarian systems been supported just for the sake of
maintaining North's own sphere of power; too obvious is the doublespeak between political protest and simultaneous pursuit of economic interests (as in the case of China). The criticism from some intellectuals however, goes much deeper. The concept of human rights embedded in European Enlightenment was developed parallel to specific economic, social and political processes. The main premise for this idea is a concept of an independent and free individual. Such an individual cannot be encountered in many of the societies and also would not have any chance of survival. To castigate this position too quickly as cultural relativism would be too shallow an argument. This is not to deny the possibility that the human rights canon of today could become universally valid in the long run. Only it cannot be imposed on the societies of the South in a shortened process. Instead of being degraded into objects of an exchange,

although the professed goal of exchange is their becoming subjects, these societies - which means naturally also individuals - ought to be involved in a process which would ultimately lead to a concept of human rights. Universality in that case would no longer be claimed by a locally demarcated society, but ensured by a global process.

Example 4: Debate on Art

Asymmetry between North and South has also crept into the discussions on art today. Although the former centres are beginning to enter into a dialogue with the art forms of the periphery - for example the New York exhibition 'Primitivism in modern art', the Paris show 'Magiciens de la terre' or the Decade show in the New Museum of contemporary Hispanic art in New York, the China Avantgarde exhibition in the Haus der Kulturen der Welt - and although the erstwhile periphery is beginning to take their destiny into their own hands, in that they organise their own Biennial and articulate themselves as the centre - for example in Brazil since the '50s, in Cuba since the '80s and now also in South Africa - the dialogue is not without tensions. Two processes contribute to it, which can be characterised as aesthetisation and culturalism. In order to analyze these processes a little more exactly, it should be borne in mind that production and reception of art is a process of communication, an exchange of signals. Both processes, culturalism and aesthetisation, do not do full justice to the complexity of this artistic process of signs.

Culturalism projects the other as part of a homogenous, static culture. The exhibition maker decided which works represents African, Cuban or Latin American culture. The choice often falls upon traditional works which are then placed in cultural historical contexts. The artist's role is not that of a dialogue partner, but as an object of projection of the exhibition maker. By being placed in a context, there is a reduction of the sensual dimension of the work to what would be considered typical for the concerned culture, so that a dialogue on the sensual, creative level remains excluded. The work of art becomes a copy for the files. The culturalist premise, as a concrete method of dealing with works of art, is as inadequate as it is misleading in its implied understanding of culture. Cultures are not rigidly delineated, unequivocally defined objects,

but ever changing systems of action and symbols. Artists from Latin-America live in Europe and North America. European artists travel to Africa and Asia. Apart from that, there is a continuous process of exchange over continents, preventing a clear demarcation according to rigid cultural boundaries.

If culturalism curtails the dialogue with the work of art on the sensual level, aesthetisation brings it right to the centre. While culturalism projects the other as an object, aesthetisation does not let the other appear at all. Aesthetisation wants a direct understanding of the work of art; what counts is the sensual present of the work of art, nor its being embedded in a complex web of meanings.

By this means for example, the concrete intentions of communication by the Australian Aborigines with regard to the opening of international markets are systematically thwarted. Many Aboriginal artists for instance, try to make use of the aesthetics of their works to provide others an access to their culture, their ways of life and thereby ensure the survival of their culture. A purely aesthetic dialogue over form, colours and material of the work of art topples this intention completely, in fact does not allow the intention to surface.

A STORY; ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHERS

What are the factors to be aware of for a successful dialogue?

By way of answering this question, I would like to read out a short story that Herb Wharton, an Australian Aborigine storyteller, narrated in June '96 at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt:

And today, as Mulga and his mates sat in the bar, an American tourist bus arrived, and as usual the question was asked: 'Where are the wild Aborigines?' This prompted one old Murri to say in plain English: 'If you want to see wild blacks then I can tell you where to find some. I shall take you to them for a carton of beer and a flagon of plonk, and you can take their photo.' 'Okay,' replied the Yank tourist and his plump powdered wife. The old Murri made the tourist pay for the carton and the plonk, then said: 'Now follow me.' So out the back of the pub they strode, the old Murri in the lead, as far as the derelict stable. There, sitting around a bottle of wine, were two old Murris and two old white men. 'These are

not wild blacks', the female tourist said. 'Yes, they are', said the Murri. 'Get your camera ready and I shall get your husband to grab the bottle of wine and pour it out. If you have not seen wild blacks before then you'll see them when your husband finishes pouring out the wine.' He then turned away, leaving the tourists staring at the men around the bottle of wine. When the story was told, the men laughed and the tourists took their photos of laughing Aborigines after giving them the grog. the tourists departed much wiser.

The story illustrates a number of aspects essential for an understanding of a NorthSouth dialogue.

1. The American tourists do not really want to get to know the Aborigines or enter into a dialogue with them. They have a preconceived knowledge before they have even seen anything and all they want is an exhibit for the files.

2. From the perspective of the Americans, the encounter is not planned as an interaction between subjects, the roll of the Aborigines is the objectified other. What determines the intended encounter is only the perspective of the Americans, namely to see 'wild Aborigines'. That the Aborigines could have a different understanding of the situation does nor enter the picture.

The instrument that facilitates this distancing objectification is the camera, although the camera is only the materialized visual sense. The observer is present, defines the action and denies the other all say in the matter.

3. The distancing from the Aborigines has already happened before the actual encounter. The Americans have taken a mental prophylactic by way of protecting themselves against an involvement with the Aborigines. Their plan namely, is not to see compatriots, people who could have similar problems as themselves, but people from another time, 'the wild'. One does not meet 'the wild', one just observes them, like animals in a zoo. Johannes Fabian in 'Time and Other' has accurately analyzed this distancing phenomenon with the help of the time concept in relation to anthropological research.

4. The prejudice of the Americans however, does not get reinforced.

Thanks to the Aborigines they cannot or are not allowed to simply carry an experience back home as proof of their observations. The Aborigines succeed in enticing the

observers, make them coactors in a common and thereby time-synchronised situation. A learning process has come out of an observational and objectifying situation: the Americans had undertaken a journey in order to see another culture, a culture set in their minds with all the cliche images. But they came upon people who interacted with them. In the shared situation of wine drinking, there is a breakdown of this segregation of cultures.

5. Herb Whatton involves his listeners too, in this learning process. The criticism of eurocentric attitudes is not voiced from the secure position of Western theory establishment, but stems from concrete experiences of the seemingly weaker. What is missing in a self-critical discourse from the Western side is the importance of the reversal of roles, because the victim of the process becomes an actor on the level of reflection through this insight.

After this survey on the importance of intercultural dialogue and the dangers of its failure, a few aspects now, which are a prerequisite for such a dialogue.

The work of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt can serve as an example. A superficial understanding of the work of this institution sees it as a presentation of the cultures of the South to a German public. This formulation, although in wide currency, also among politicians, is misleading in every way.

1. The form and content of the dialogue: If the other is merely presented, there is no real dialogue possible, as in that case, we too remain mere observers and are not coactors. In a real dialogue, on the other hand, the schemes of thinking and perception of all concerned is in a common pool, so to say, and has to be negotiated. This avoids an over hasty assimilation of the other as well as an over hasty distancing from an object, misused as a field of projection for one's own need of the exotic. As far as content goes, this implies that themes have to be arrived at that equally concern both sides rather than choosing them arbitrarily through an internal

debate on issues supposedly relating to the foreign culture, and that too with Western experts polemising on how the others should see themselves. Rather than discussing Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria for example and acting as if we are dealing with an issue localised South of the Mediterranean, the issue to be thematised is the different forms of fundamentalism, also in our own midst. Only when the dialogue with the South becomes an integral part of international dialogue, that is to say, of the main stream, an institution like the Haus der Kulturen der Welt would have fulfilled its role and not when it is used as a showcase, a forum to delegate this work to. Networking with other institutions in Berlin and Germany and also with the rest of the world is of paramount importance to the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in this context.

2. Participants in the dialogue: The expression 'dialogue of cultures' too, is misleading. The participants in the dialogue are namely individuals or groups. To treat them only or mainly as representatives of their respective culture or country is to objectify them to some extent, relativise their contribution and not to take them seriously as dialogue partners. In a situation where, as described earlier, borders of nation states become less and less important for processes of exchange, it is vital to create informal networks between artists and intellectuals on an international level, networks that are not oriented to traditional units such as state and culture and naturally also not to the NorthSouth demarcation. Institutions like the Haus der Kulturen der Welt must define themselves as an international institution in this sense, but at the same time not lose sight of the fact that in the dialogue process certain issues have to be related to the respective local reference systems. Only, the latter has to be negotiated in and through the discourse itself and cannot be unquestioningly made a precondition for the dialogue by setting a premise, namely cultural relativism.

Berndt Michael Scherer works at the 'Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin'.

13

DISCUSSION WITH

Helga Trüpel and Berndt Michael Scherer

> ### > Rasheed Araeen to Berndt M. Scherer:

When you say that the notion of really free individuals is very much an Enlightenment idea, and at the same time that that individual freedom does not exist in many societies....

> ### > Berndt M. Scherer:

No that is a misunderstanding. There are also concepts of individuals in other cultures. What is important is that on an economic and social level for many people in India and Pakistan, it is impossible to live as free individuals. There are family boundaries that are important for them. Not in a way that they do not see themselves as individuals but they cannot provide the means to live as such. I do not want the distinction that in Europe there is individualism and in Asia it is the group belonging. But for certain people in India it is hard to claim individuality in an economical and social context.

> ### > Rasheed Araeen:

I want to dispute that. I think to reduce the social relationship to one level would be a mistake. People in Pakistan and people in Western countries inter-relate with the rest of society. There is no such a thing as strict individualism. I think to generalise is a mistake. I agree that there are difficulties that have to do with traditional notions of society, because we live with the legacy of colonialism, the kind of institutions that guarantee individual freedom do not yet exist in the same way as they exist in the West. This is the reason for intellectual migration. The paradox is that those people who migrate with the aspiration for total freedom are caught up in Western society as ethnic minorities.

> ### > Berndt M. Scherer:

Basically I agree with you. I do not want to discuss them as cultural distinctions, those differences, but more in terms of economical and political distinctions. I completely agree that to a great extent it is just the failure of the national state institutions which just do not work and do not provide the possibility for an individual to live its life where it has to fall back on social ties in order to secure his or her life.

> ### > Rasheed Araeen:

The Sufi philosophy in Islam has a powerful idea of 'vudi' which means the self. In fact, that is a pre-enlightenment idea. The individual can actually leave society and gain a transgressional relation with society.

> Berndt M. Scherer:

In this Sufi philosophy it is a spiritual relationship, whereas in the West the basic idea of the system is to make the individual also economically and socially independent. There I see a major difference.

> Ria Lavrijsen:

When we look at Dutch society, there is a great pressure from families and so on. It is dangerous to make those clear distinctions between the West and the non-West.

> Gavin Jantjes:

I never understood the name of your institution 'Haus der Kulturen der Welt'. Why have an institution like that when there is a very cosmopolite society right under your nose?

The second question about the Haus der Kulturen is why is there never a German, French or English exhibition, why only the far countries?

> Berndt M. Scherer:

As I see it, this separation is something we do not believe in, so the name is a misleading name. That is question number one. What I think the Haus should really do is to engage in international issues and discourses. The Haus may represent the majority of the Southern countries, but only as members of a particular culture, speaking as an expert about a certain question in an international dialogue. You are asking for exhibitions from European culture. That is going to happen this winter. You can come to Berlin and see a Spanish exhibition. We will invite poets from the Mediterranean area. So I completely accept your criticism and I think we have to change the basic concept of the Haus into an international centre for global issues. A similar problem for an institution like the Goethe Institute, is that it is also a national institution which involves bi-lateral discourses. But the most important issues are global issues and not just concerning two countries.

> Helga Trüpel:

I want to come back to another point, the influence of the churches and religion. You say there was until about twenty, thirty years ago, a strong influence even in Germany and the Netherlands, especially on women, girls and family boundaries. At the moment I think there are new attempts in Germany from Islamic religious people to increase their influence on boys and girls, resulting in less freedom. I think that is a problem. The difference between the development in the Western countries and other countries, is that the influence of religion is so different.

> Rasheed Araeen:

That depends on what you mean. If you mean that people have been reduced to a level where they are not able to be an individual, the answer is no. We also have a strong secular tradition. I would again talk about Sufi, because Sufi recognises all cultures, all religions. The whole correlation is reconstruct the culture as a whole, not spiritualism. You are mistaken in saying that our tradition is only about spiritualism.

> Awee Prins:

What I do not really understand is: we are talking about individualism, about coherence in different cultures, Sarat Maharaj speaks about the possibility of a real dialogue, an optimistic view, but is the concept of individualism, that you must make your way as an individual, to get rid of that coherence, is that not a typically Western concept? What if the other does not want to get into the position of the 'herrschaftsfreie Kommunikation' that Habermas is longing for?

> Rasheed Araeen:

I do not think you can define individualism as a Western concept. As soon as you want to be a writer in a non-West context, you have to fight for a kind of freedom for intellectual and artistic expression and through that freedom it is possible to criticise certain elements in whatever part of the world. Freedom cannot be possessed by the West.

> Awee Prins:

I agree with that. But there are different ways to be an individual. I doubt the idea that writers and painters have to fight. Painters in the Middle Ages knew what they had to paint, what they could and could not paint. Were they restrained by coherence, should they have been liberated?

> Gavin Jantjes:

I come back to the whole reason for this Rotterdam Festival. Why are we looking at other cultures? We have a reason to do that. The reason might be that we have an ethnographic interest in the rest of the world. We agree we have a crisis on our hands. One way to address this crisis is by looking beyond it because of perhaps some kind of root identity it might have. Mister Scherer said he is interested in the global, well I am interested in the local. I am much more interested to find out from Helga Trüpel, when they sit down and make decisions about cultural politics, who makes these decisions? Are they people who actually are in power to do that, are your Polish, Turkish, Italian citizens involved, are they even citizens?

> Helga Trüpel:

At first I want to say that this is a very good question. The local level shows us all the global problems I think. There are people from so many countries and also the problem we discuss here now, individualism, is outside of our doors because there are some Islamic people in Bremen who do not want a division of church and state. But I grew up in a society where to a large extent there is the division of church and state and I want to live like that. On the other side, there was the question of how people make their own decisions. At the moment that is only slightly possible. There is some money given to the people, about 40.000 marks a year, a very small amount, and they can decide what activities they will spend the money on. We tried to organise elections for the people from foreign countries to express their own interests. But at the moment there is no politician in our state who wants these kinds of elections. People from other countries in Germany have no possibility to participate in normal elections, that is the problem; the official policy is that only people with German parents are allowed to vote, are German citizens. We tried to build some new structures to enable the people to spend money for their community the way they choose. To have their own meetings, exhibitions and so on but the whole thing only just started.

> Berndt M. Scherer:

In the context of Berlin there is a council. People can apply for money. The council representatives from different communities decide about the applications. The Haus der Kulturen has one representative in the council. If let us say a Turkish group wants to do a programme with us or in our institute, that is possible. In my paper I did not give a complete view of the activities of the house of cultures. The house was funded by the Berlin Senate and the Foreign Office. The aim is on the one hand the context of multicultural Berlin and on the other hand to participate in international discourses. This local-global task must not be seen as a dichotomy. It provides the means to look at problems in a more international way and not only in a German or Berlin context. Up till now I thought it was typical for German history, to tend to concentrate just on the German situation and not to open up really.

CULTURAL
IDENTITY IS AN INVENTION

Bazon Brock

I would like to tell you how I got involved in the problem we are discussing here, uniculturalism or multiculturalism or culturalism at all. When I started at the University of Frankfurt I had to learn that for instance a very famous experimental physicist, Mr. Leonard (who won the Nobel Prize for his studies) invented in the 30's in Germany the term and fact of 'Jewish' or - even worse - 'verjudete' Physik, a term of cultural expression to qualify those scientists who were not German and if they were German, not ethnic German but Jewish German or integrated Jews or whatever. I wondered why I did not get an answer from my professors to the question 'How could a genius like Leonard be able to develope such a term to characterise the work of his colleagues?' Everybody said of course: 'To get rid of them'. That was the reason why he invented this term of cultural differentiation. One of the professors I asked was Adorno and he in those days, the 60's, did involve us in a study on the culture of employees and he very fluently introduced us to the cultural patterns normal employees stick to. After the study was finished, he invited us to see him at his home and suddenly we were confronted with the culture in his own home. He did not even recognise that he was speaking about himself while speaking about the average employee of those days. Again I wondered how such a brilliant mind was not able to understand that he did not say anything about the culture of employees, but that he was speaking just about himself

without knowing it. Later on, when I became a professor myself, I had to deal with some difficulties in working with students I hardly recognised as foreigners. When I for instance had to reject the doctoral thesis of one of them, he started a campaign saying that I was rejecting his thesis because he was a foreigner. He stated: "Does not everybody know that Germans are racists and does not even your president Mr. Weizsäcker tell everybody that you and all your colleagues are xenophobic, so the reason why you rejected my doctoral thesis is that you are xenophobic and a racist?" I tried to argue with him but I was not very successful. The student started a campaign to sue us and in the court the judge said 'Well is it not true that you have prejudices'? I said 'Of course, like everyone I have'. The judge said I was guilty because I admitted having prejudices.

To understand oneself in social behaviour and acting is first of all knowing that we by nature have all kinds of prejudices which are just arguments - without experiences - to deal with people and their interests, without understanding them and therefore not being able to deal with them. That is quite normal. I am a man who knows how he functions with these kinds of prejudices and I think that it is something that one should accept. But the judge said because I admitted to having prejudices, I had to accept the thesis of the student.

Then I tried to find out how painters from Morocco, Algeria and other African countries were lucky and successful in

integrating into the cultural world. They told me that their problem was that they were only accepted as painters because they were from Morocco, Algeria and so on. The normal criteria for accepting a work of art are no longer valid because of these new multicultural criteria, without any regard for artistic quality. To me that is discrimination. So I wanted to judge their work without the multi-culti criteria in mind. And that was what they wanted. We started the discussion on their work, it was a group of about twenty-five artists from different European art schools and nearly everybody forced the exhibition makers to choose them not for their personal history or background or the multicultural aspects or quotations and cultural heritage and so on, but just to take them seriously as European oriented artists.

These are a few examples of how I was forced to think about the general problem of culturalism and the personal experience, I think, is the basis we should rely on when arguing about these problems. The most important of these arguments I can learn from my experience is that knowing a foreigner or representative of another culture does not mean accepting or understanding him or his culture. The ideology of using cultural expressions as a kind of bridge for those who do not understand each other completely fails. Always trying and pretending to understand each other means a complete breakdown of relationships. When we, the group of artists and myself, finally did understand each other, this did not effect how we finally decided to work together.

This kind of experience forced me to think about culturalism. In studying cultural history, the most important result was that I learned that cultural identity or culturalism itself was an invention in the period of the Napoleon wars in Prussia and that there was nothing equivalent to cultural identities what we could point out, it was an invention which is contrary to the facts. The invention or construction of cultural identity is so awful because you cannot argue about it by pointing out the facts. No rational argument is able to get rid of this kind of argument because everybody says cultural identity is so important because it is a counterfactual term or idea.

When I found out about this urgency of culturalism, I started to reconstruct how this invention became powerful, by for instance

joining it with the invention of the nation state. I found out that even economic interest was promoted by this idea of cultural identity, this counterfactual idea. So in the end, after a really long study, we could show that it was not the weapons of Krupp that interfered in European affairs in those days, but the cultural identity which was joined or dedicated to this kind of power policy. When following this idea, we had to find an argument which was useful for the argument about multiculturalism. Because, as I just mentioned, in the 80's there were many foreign students, nearly every one of them was forced to rely on this cultural identity to formulate his interests in participating in social affairs, getting money and whatsoever. Without any substantial argument beyond the status of being a member of a cultural minority, the requests were granted. That is what I want to discuss here. What kind of conclusions do we finally use when we are forced not only in terms of political correctness, to argue or to make out decisions in everyday life, teachers at highschool, at university or whatever. As far as I could follow the discussion this afternoon, an answer must be found, otherwise we will be trapped in our own argumentation of self justification. If we could find some argument for how to behave in everyday affairs, I would be very happy. Because up to now I do not have the slightest idea. I could just join in these kinds of theoretical arguments - every speaker has something that I can accept and others that I cannot accept, so I think it is not a matter of qualifying theoretical studies - but to come to the very point I want to argue about, how we, personally, should react in these situations, that is my interest and that is why I am here, to learn perhaps from you all. What kind of argumentations we can use to stand this kind of horrible misguidance by different aspects of ideologies we are undergoing even now. I think I have to come to deal with this very point within the next few months because at the end of this university period, we have to decide in half dozen cases in which we need some personal abilities to really understand each other and of course understand ourselves in what we decide.

Prof. Dr. Bazon Brock is a philosopher and art historian.

DISCUSSION WITH

Bazon Brock

> Berndt M. Scherer:

When you speak of construction, and I do not agree with that, does that imply that it is unreal and what does that unreality mean? Because construction means that it has economical and social implications. Why is this construction different from the construction of nation states?

> Bazon Brock:

It is not different from the construction of nation states. It would not have been possible to work on the idea of nation state without the idea of cultural identity. The fact is that the economic development and the political development, really the idea of power policy, was dependant on cultural identity, it was the substance of these developments. As culture in general is a system of including or excluding people, so the cultural identity is the heart of the mechanism to exclude or to include. Economic processes and power policies do depend on this differentiation between those who are included and those who are excluded. Therefore the artists, authors, musicians, for instance in Germany, Wagner who was one of the outstanding ideologists in the 19th century, were so powerful. That is why everybody was so interested in the arts, in literature and in music. The artists did create this idea of cultural identity. Without this contribution to power policies and nation state and so on, nobody would ever have had such an interest in what was going on in the world of musicians, artists and authors.

> Awee Prins:

You are speaking now as a historian. Would you like to take the position of a moralist who would say this is where everything went wrong?

> Bazon Brock:

In a sense, this is one of the reasons why it went wrong in such an extreme way. The German-Jewish relationships are the consequences of the policy of identity and cultural policies.

> Awee Prins:

The Jews found out about cultural identity long before it was initiated in the 19th century or even the Greeks with the invention of the polis invented cultural identity calling everybody a barbarian who was outside the polis, so it is as old as mankind. Or is it a typical modern phenomenon?

> Bazon Brock:

It was not a question of cultural identity, it was just a question of explaining your ability and your will to participate. In the polis for instance, as the written statements tell us, one was able to join society, the polis, by accepting the rules and regulations. Barbarians were those who did not understand this because they were speaking a foreign language. That was the differentiation between barbarians and the members of the polis. The others were those who did not accept the rules and regulations on political or cultural affairs. It was not discrimination in the way that the barbarians were seen as representatives of mankind.

> Ria Lavrijsen:

What I understand is that Mr. Brock has a big personal problem. About the students and the process. When something like that happens in university, do you really feel that we are stuck, that you as a professor cannot judge the work of a foreign student?

> Bazon Brock:

With identity policy, it is not a question of how you can argue. It means that there is no argument.

> Ria Lavrijsen:

You are referring all the time to identity policy and I very much object the idea that identity is only related to origin or race, ethnicity.

> Bazon Brock:

But it does. Identity policy leads to inclusion, or exclusion.

> Ria Lavrijsen:

At least I, whether in my professional or in my personal life, cannot make a very clear distinction, I cannot define cultural identity only on the basis of ethnicity. Let us say I have a party and white and black friends are there. I cannot say this person has this identity and that person has that identity on the basis of race. It may be possible that on the basis of sex or sexual orientation, the social atmosphere, the class, that there are loyalties. These loyalties are very complex.

> Bazon Brock:

If you are asked to decide, for instance the judge, or somebody who is to judge a piece of work of someone, his request for money, the question is: are you really forced into xenophobia politically.

> Ria Lavrijsen:

In the womens movement there was a plea for extra care and help because of the historical deprivation and I think that is also happening in the minority communities. In the end, there is always something like the quality of the work of the scientist or artist. Each employee might bring along his or her perspective.

> Bazon Brock:

That may be for me or for you, but with the eyes of those from the other side, it is not a question of quality because if I would be one of these students and my professor would reject my thesis, I think I would argue that he rejected it because of the fact he is xenophobic or he is not able to understand it because his cultural identity is different or that he is forced into a cultural system which excludes my ideas.

> Awee Prins:

I think we must stress that Mr. Brock is not trying to elaborate on a personal problem but presents a broader scope of how to evaluate or discuss what we do not easily understand. On the other hand the invention of cultural identity still bothers me. These students do not approach you with an invention, they approach you with a tradition.

> Bazon Brock:

No. In the historical argument everybody knew that was even a fake and the artistic or intellectual genius like Wagner did exactly know what he was doing.

> Awee Prins:

If he had gone to Africa to explain what he was doing, he would have been told to be a complete idiot.

> Bazon Brock:

No, but he did go to Paris to the Meyerbeer group. 'You will not be able to accept that, therefore I have to terrorise you', that is what he told everybody. He said that you need to have money to buy all these guys in Paris to have some success as an opera composer or you have to terrorise them. Why terrorise them? Because we tell them we, as Germans, have a completely different cultural identity. Not Goebels, not anyone who was involved in this business, not even the ordinary people were ever convinced that there was something they could rely on for their cultural identity because they knew best for themselves that if you asked them 'could you show your cultural identity?', they would say 'yes, I belong to the culture of Goethe and Schiller', 'do you know some poems of Schiller, could you please tell me, are you reading Schiller and Goethe everyday?' They knew that this meant nothing and people did tell the professors, even in the twenties, that the ideas of national socialism were just nationalism, just a brilliant weapon to get rid of arguments because argument is this kind of Jewish intellectual dialecticand so they disarmed everybody. So the people did use this argument, because it was the only way of not being forced into an argument which they had to lose of course.

> Awee Prins:

I want to stress the fact that the German culture for a short period had really invented cultural identity but I still pose the question: do your students come to you with an invention or with a certain tradition?

> Bazon Brock:

No. We all are unable to represent traditions. We do not know them. No one who is claiming to be a member of a cultural tradition is able to quote an epos or does not know the historical framework, just nothing.

> Rasheed Araeen:

Can we drop the word cultural identity and let us talk about artistic identity. We see where the word cultural is leading to in this debate. Invention for me is a very positive word, you are using it as a negative term. Picasso invented an artistic identity for himself, which is different from moral identity as an artist. Yet we do not question their special identities despite the fact they were inventions. They were not, as was suggested here, coming out of somewhere in the past. I believe it is something attempting to belong to the individual person. When you use the word invention of cultural identity, how do you differentiate from the identity invention? I am trying to understand what is going on in your head in terms of differentiation.

> Bazon Brock:

For Picasso, he never would have asked someone to be respected because of his identity as an artist, never. Because he knew that this would not have meant a thing to anybody. No one would have bought his paintings.

> Rasheed Araeen:

I agree with you there. This is a very interesting phenomenon that you come across. We cannot dismiss that as an invention. I do not think that invention can be dismissed as fake. The discourse about the word itself is fruitful. We must understand that invention of identity - I do not agree with the identity which comes out of the idea of presenting a natural presentation, pretending a cultural identity. But nevertheless how can we contextualise why, if someone finds it necessary to invent identity, does he do so? What is the context in which they are inventing cultural identity? I think that they would not do the same thing in Nigeria as we do in

Germany, England and France. So we have to ask: why did we invent this identity? We are forgetting a very important context. This context of European culture, why did we find that position, that we had to produce this cultural identity? Although it is not the right thing, but I do not think we can dismiss it.

> Bazon Brock:

It is a counterfactual invention, that is important. In the afternoon you mentioned the term individuality, personality, as a Europe-valued term. But individuality in a German ideological European, philosophical term is a counterfactual invention. So the difference is that everybody who needs to integrate in a social group knows that he is an individual. But to argue with the individuality in this kind of counterfactual way, means that we use it to include or to exclude someone for very special purposes, for instance to force him to demonstrate his loyalty to a cultural system or value system. So even the idea of God you may call a counterfactual invention. On the other hand, it is just an invention for everybody who ever lived on earth. The question is what do we do with this, do you try to force this kind of argumentation into excluding or including? My conclusion was, to give up the argument on culture and all these terms we have developed to describe something which is only to be described in the clear view of the counterfactual aspect of it, as an ideology. If we use it in critics of ideology, it is okay, but if not, then you are trapped in this kind of culturalism. If we argue about what are the facts and about how do we react to the facts, and what do the facts do to us, we have to decide whether we have to enforce this kind of argument or we should quit. In the 18th century, Europeans in different fields decided to give up this term and rely on something which is much easier to use, the term of civilisation. If there is something to exclude and include in social structure, how do these exclusive groups cooperate and communicate with one another? So what happens between the cultures themselves? Even if you allow them to argue with cultural identity, how could the relationship between the different cultures function, what is this relationship? It could not be the culture itself. Most important are not the cultures but the relationship between them. This is a higher ranking effect in history, economics or whatever. Let us study these kinds of relationships and the name for this relation is civilisation. So up to the end of the 18th century in Europe, almost everybody was able to describe these historical problems without using the term culture in an ideological sense. But then Napoleon's ideas of forcing regional cultures of France under this priority of civilisation got hold of France. The regions did rebel against this idea and Napoleon himself was going much too far in forcing Europe into civilisation. The reaction was the strengthening of cultural identities by inventing them and combining them with the idea of nation states. That ideology is up till now the most powerful way of getting rid of everything you do not like and is not in your interest. But within these 18th century ideas of civilisation, everybody was forced to fight for his own interest.

A civilised man says 'I try to discuss with my judge, I say that I know that I am depending on prejudices, I know I have bad ideas and interests that are not to be accepted as common, and that was and even is the very point of argument with the idea of civilisation against culturalism. People who stick to their cultural identity say: 'How could you ever accept the guidance of civilised persons who deny their cultural identity?' When they themselves say we do have interests, we do have the ability to, as Goethe said, commit almost any crime you can think of. Do not trust us too much. We undergo something like that in university because everybody wants us to be politically correct, to convince them that we are just brilliant minds without any interests and pride, to understand everybody and being peaceful and not wanting to hurt everybody. But this is not true. Therefore, civilised people are so suspicious about everybody because civilised people know who they are. What kind of implications there are, just being human.

> Awee Prins:

In fact you are saying that there should be an inflation of the term cultural identity in favour of civilised identity. But is civilised identity not a concept of the West?

> Bazon Brock:

Yes, it is not identity, because if it was just me, it would not mean anything. Then I could force everybody to undergo or to submit himself to the aspects I represent. A civilised man

cannot represent anything but some very special aspects of the problematic ideology of cultures.

The question is: what do you stand for? Do you stand for civilisation? As far as now we can say, we stand against the horrible battles going on between the cultures. We want to stop this kind of rigid idiotic killing and betraying and arguing about which culture is higher. Because every culture means everything to those who belong to it. All cultures are equal, it is just a matter of excluding and including, the rest is ideology. If you ask what do you stand for, one can only say: I stand for getting rid of this kind of quarrel that is going on in ex-Yugoslavia and all over the world. The others can say: we ate forced into this killing because we have to stand for our cultural identity, because you told us that the highest thing for a human being is his cultural identity. So if Americanism or whatever is threatening our cultural identity, we have to fight.

> Ria Lavrijsen:

Mr.Brock, do you feel that the quality of the curriculum in university is in fact being threatened by the presence of people from other cultures and do you feel pushed in a position that you have to be nice to other people or is there the possibility of a critical dialogue?

> Bazon Brock:

Of course there is the possibility of a critical dialogue but if discussing the curriculum, the consequences are not very charming. The reason for the increasing barbarianism is that we all rely on our cultural identity because cultural identity means the right to kill in the end, that is the outmost loyalty.

> Ria Lavrijsen:

You are talking about ethnic chauvinism and ethnocentrism in communities and of coutse you find that everywhere.

> Bazon Brock:

It is not a question of stupidity, these guys in ex-Yugoslavia are not stupid, nor were Hitler and Goebels. So it was not a question of enlightening their mind. It is the structure of the argument. There is nothing to be brought up against these arguments. I was in New York where I by chance did see an accident where a Jewish male driver hurt an African-American pedesttian. This was not a traffic accident but a demonstration of the necessity of relying on cultural identity on both sides. Every argument reinforced the opponent in his idea. The thing is that traffic rules are not based on culture identity but on civilisation.

> Rasheed Araeen:

Civilisation has also to do with the dominance of one culture. You cannot eliminate the racist component in society. Society produces cultural identities and you cannot bring these men together on this rational level, disregarding the racist component in society.

> Bazon Brock:

No you cannot indeed. Not even here in Holland. But you can accept the facts and traffic accidents are facts. And that is something we have to learn because the reliance on cultural identity, culturalism, multiculturalism is so dangerous.

> Rasheed Araeen:

But you have to deal with it, you have to deal with European culture.

> Bazon Brock:

Yes, but the argument based on cultural identity has been falsified. So the arguments cultural groups arm their members with, have been proved wrong. That is the consequence of cultural identity being an invention, an invention of Eutope in the 19th century.

> Berndt M. Scherer:

What is your criterium for the term 'countetfactual facts'? The culturalist would say 'that is my opinion'. You seem to suggest that there is a distinction between facts and cultural constructions. What are your criteria for this distinction?

> Bazon Brock:

Everybody knows there is a difference between lying and not lying, the power or necessity of lying. And the whole idea of cultural identity is that everybody who uses this argument knows that he is lying because there has never been something like ethnic homogeneity, never, or the purity of blood.

> Gavin Jantjes:

I am so surprised by the shifting from the invention of identity to civilisation. At the roots of that shift lies the pragmatic 'dennoch'-effect. The leap across this gap is so vast that to be pragmatic, you get from A to B, and do all the silly things to get there and what you propose is idealistic and we want a move and make a change, to achieve something.

> Bazon Brock:

The cultural concept is idealistic, the civilisation concept is realistic because it means that you just have to know what is going on. You have to accept that there is nothing corresponding to the term of cultural identity and so on. We have no legitimacy to kill, living without believing in cultural identity is like living with the idea that there is no God. Civilisation means to accept the problem as unsolvable. What is going on in the world? It is the creation of problems which can never be solved. There will always be a difference between the rich and the poor. Every culture pretends that problems can be solved if you stick to this or that dogma, this kind of identity. How do we get attention from the people by telling that no system, no ideology, no industry will be able to solve the problems. People have to get rid of those ideas to be realistic and only if they are realistic, will there be a chance to stop the problems caused by cultural priorities.

16

GLOBALISATION
VERSUS LOCALISATION

Arjo Klamer

Rotterdam is a city with aspirations. It wants to be a world-class city and hence seeks to enhance its reputation all around. Considering the inflow of people one could say, the city is succeeding. For rhey come from all over rhe world; they come from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Larin America ro start a living; and they come from France to purchase drugs. Together with the natives, all these people are making Rorterdam into a truly multicultural city. This development still does not satisfy city officials and prominent citizens in the business and cultural sectors. They would love to see Rotterdam getting from under the shadow of that other major Dutch city, whose name I hardly dare to use here. Organise spectacular fesrivals, get Rotterdam to be rhe cultural capital of Europe and the cultural fences that still seem to cordon the ciry, will fall away, so they seem to think. A city without borders is a ciry without limitations. How swell this rhetoric sounds. It may even stir the good citizens in front of their tellies. And it is all so understandable given the mind of this century. 'Go forth,' we exhort each other, 'explore, break with the traditions, embrace the new, rhe unknown, cross boundaries, cultures, and dare to wander'. Yes, wanderers we are to be. Travellers in the unknown, always striving to be in rhe vanguard. On we go, never to look back. Shed rhe chains of provincialism and nationalism. Think global. Think yourself a citizen of the world.'

How well I recall having been stirred myself by these voices, by this grandiose sentiment, when eighteen years ago I chose to leave my family and my country ro explore and test myself in the New World. On the move I wanted to be, a citizen of rhe world. Change was good. Holding on was not. Now I recognise my action for what it was: a response in the spirit of the rime. The name we have given to that spirit is modernism.

Modernism manifests itself nor only in local aspirarions of city officials, artists and business people, or in the moves of the young, the formal designs that characterize our century. Mondriaan is of this century, and so is Richard Meyer, rhe architect of the new ciry hall of the Hague. Minimal their design has to be, to create space for the cosmopoliran imagination. Freed from the obligarion to represent the natural and pay homage to the classical tradirions, artisrs were able to explore the unknown and so they could wander. The rraveller has become their ideal type, and travelled rhey have, in the real world as well as in their imagination.

The modernist spirit began ro dominate in every conceivable artistic, intellectual, scientific, economic, and political sphere. In politics, it was the democratic procedure of representation by means of election that was conceived to free citizens from class and give them an equal say. International movements and organisations were advanced to overcome

cultural and national barriers and form a
wordly sense of community.
The International Court, the United
Nations, the World Bank and so many other
organisations were inventions inspired by this
modernist spirit. Even the modern ideologies
that appeared to tear the world apart,
communism on the one side and
Keynesianism on the other, shared the
modernist ideals of progress, change, social
control through science, emancipation of the
individual, and internationalism. The shared
ideals may account for the vehemence of the
hostilities and for the relative ease with
which both sides found each other after the
fall of the Wall.

In economics, the market is that great
human invention that is supposed to bring
all parties together. In the market, price is
the great arbiter; it alone decides who gets
what, regardless of status, culture, race or
sex. The market was to be the great equalizer
for overcoming discrimination of all sorts.
Where it penetrated a social fabric, it led to a
disintegration of existing hierarchies and
kinship associations. In market situations
traditional authorities will ultimately loose in
the competition with the entrepreneurial
types, the merchants, the industrialists, the
dealers. The market was also purported to be
the great developer as it is supposed to send
jobs to places where they are most needed for
the simple reason that here, their price will
be low. No wonder that economists lost
interest in cultural and psychological factors.
Like artists, they anticipated the global world
economy with its cosmopolitan citizens and
constructed models that did not know
borders and inhabitants with specific cultural
identities. Like artists, architects and
political ideologues, economists sought to
express themselves in a universal language to
be understood any time, any place.

However, after one century of
globalisation and universalisation, the
modernist spirit is showing signs of
exhaustion. Too many bad things have
happened in its name - from world wars and
nuclear threat to desolate architecture and
sterile sciences. Furthermore, the excitement
of the new tends to wear off, especially when
it keeps coming in great doses. And many
grow tired after a while of the wandering and
the exploring.

That at least was my experience after a
while in that New World with all its
challenges. I had sought out those challenges,
explored new territory, inhabited a truly
multicultural society, and experimented in
new life styles, just as these modernist voices
had admonished me to do. But doubts had
set in. I found myself disconnected from the
institutions that had employed me, unable to
become a true member. Too often I sat
through meetings without having once the
sense of sharing the essential passions with
others. I could not get too excited about new
plans or annoyed with silly initiatives,
thinking something like 'Why meddle? I am
a visitor and it is really their business.' Being
amongst internationals, that is, the non-
Americans, was interesting, but after a few
years I began to realize that what bounds us
more than anything else was a sense of being
different from our host, the Americans.
Virtually every conversation would tend to
veer to the topic of cultural differences. 'The
Dutch have a deeper appreciation of
friendship', I would say, to prod a Nepalese
friend to talk about the sense of family in his
country. Not that these conversations would
resolve anything. On the contrary, they only
affirmed our sense of cultural confusion: in
the maelstrom of international life, we ended
up wondering what our identity was. The
longer we stayed, the more confused we
became. After ten years I stopped being real
Dutch but could not consider myself
American. So what was I?

Some of those in my environment loved
being without roots in one particular place.
A girlfriend at that time, who thought of
herself as an Italian, Peruvian, British, and
Portuguese all in one, was happiest in
airports. I guessed that was because of the
sense of the transient that such a place
conveys. In airports people from all over the
world gather to be on the move; only for a
short time they hit the ground before they
continue their journey. I knew we had a
problem because even though airports
appealed to the modernist in me, they often
had a depressing influence on me; amidst all
strangers, each with a story that I will never
get to know, I feel so insignificant to the
point of feeling lost. In airports, the things I
do, tend to loose their meaning. Why bother
if I am just another person on the move in a
cloud of anonymity?

A few years ago I found myself to take
that airport experience of mine serious. And
I acknowledged the urge to return to familiar
soil and find a place where I could grow
roots.

One episode left a lasting impression on me. We, four college professors who regularly would meet to discuss things that mattered to us, were sitting in a cafe in a small university town in the middle of the United States. One of us, a Cuban woman, was preoccupied with the anxieties she was experiencing. She was close to forty and had just gained tenure at the university. If you only knew half of what pressure there is at American universities before tenure is gained, you would expect her to be exhilarated. But she was not, because now she had accomplished what she had wanted for so long and to what she had directed all her efforts, she realised that she was missing something crucial in her life. Something like a meaningful relationship and the pleasures of motherhood. She was despondent. So she sighed and told us she intended to take a sabbatical, withdraw into a monastery just 'to find out who I really am'. It sounded right and I nodded. But one of the others, a professor in theology, shifted on his chair, then leaned over and softly asked: 'I think I understand what you are after. But why don't you change the question and instead of wondering who you are, ask to whom you belong'.

That single remark hit me deeply. Maybe it was because I was growing tired of wandering in search of challenges and embracing the new all the time. Maybe it was because I was about to become a father. Whatever, my personal psychology is not relevant here. The move that my friend suggested the woman should make, asks for a turning away from the modernist preoccupation with the inner self to the relevant others around us. As soon as I recognised this, I began to notice that people all around were ready to make the same move, or already had made it.
I recognised that move in the communitarian movement that was about to take off in the United States at that time; it was articulated in the writings of Christopher Lasch, Robert Bellah, Amitai Etzioni, Alasdair MacIntyre, Martha Nussbaum and so many others; it got expressed in the political campaigns of Clinton and Jesse Jackson. To be clear, none of this fits the post-modernist mood, that mood of relativizing, of play, irony and deconstruction that characterizes the modernist reaction against itself. For here, the talk is about culture and value, tradition

and authority, community and roots or everything that the modernist spirit opposed, and the post-modernist spirit continues to ironize and criticize. When I told the story about my academic friends in a circle of artists and critics, one critic, he was British, responded with the admonishment against sentimentality; he continued to speak of the suffocating effects of the talk about tradition and values, made the association with neo-conservatism and landed that final blow by referring to the ethnic warfare in the Balkan. The post-modernist spirit cannot tolerate the neo-traditionalist move as I has been calling the re-evaluation of values and traditions and the recovery of the sense for culture.

Neo-traditionalism is merely an expression to focus my thoughts and draw your attention. If you walk away from this text with this notion stuck in your memory, I would be pleased, even though the dangers of labels are great and I am not prepared for a dogmatic defense of its use. That much I have learned from the modernist tradition - and a tradition it has become. Neo-traditionalism represents the spirit that seeks and appreciates tradition and to that end revisits the past, yet it differs from the conservative spirit in that it embraces the modernist sensibility for change and hence recognizes the evolving nature of traditions. In opposition to the wandering spirit of modernism, it accentuates the sense of place and the belonging to that place. Instead of the universalizing and globalising tendency of modernism, neo-traditionalism represents an appreciation of culture, community, Gemeinschaft. So in this spirit we will not do what our ancestors did; no, we will respect what they did and take their habits and values into account when we negotiate our modern lives. Instead of directing our gaze at the abstract world, concerning the world our village (what an arrogance by the way!), we bring whatever we value in that world back into the local community and the time to which we belong. Neo-traditionalist is the painter Stijn Peeters, whom I met recently. He introduced himself as a Dutch painter - a highly unusual thing to do in a profession that likes to be viewed as being beyond culture and nationality - and when I asked him why he did so, he told me that he was studying the work of the old Dutch masters in the desire to be as good as they are. Later he sent me pictures of some of his

paintings and I saw that in his case painting after the masters did not mean painting just like them. No, his paintings were modern alright, yet distinctively Dutch.

So this neo-traditionalist spirit is distinctively modern in the sense that it does not desire to go back and relive the past. In therapeutic settings, this spirit manifests itself in the realisation that we cannot rid ourselves from our past and choose a new identity altogether and that therefore we do better negotiate our identity against the background of that past. A new spirit it is not altogether. Just read these admonishments of that acclaimed modernist, Karl Marx, in a letter to Arnold Ruge, a Young Hegelian associate:

"Our motto must therefore be: Reform of consciousness not through dogmas, but through analysing the mystical consciousness, the consciousness which is unclear to itself, whether it appears in religious or political form. Then it will transpire that the world has long been dreaming of something that it can acquire if only it becomes conscious of it. It will transpire that it is not a matter of drawing a great dividing line between the past and future, but of carrying out the thoughts of the past. And finally, it will transpire that mankind begins no new work, but consciously accomplishes its old work."

Carrying out the thoughts of the past,.. no new work: this is what the neo-traditionalist spirit would move us to say.

Neo-traditionalism has unmistakable political and economic ramifications. In politics it is manifest in questions about identity and solidarity. In reaction to the individualisation and economisation of our lives, both resonants of the modernist spirit, the neo-traditionalist spirit urges upon us to consider to whom we belong and what it means to be Dutch, or, for that matter, a citizen of Rotterdam. It is the need for cultural distinction to which we respond in this spirit. The excessiveness in which this need can get expressed, as in the Balkans and in fundamentalist movements, only attests to its urgency and the importance of respecting the neo in neo-traditionalism.

In economics, the awareness is growing that extreme forms of individualism as well as globalising strategies can be counterproductive. A corporation, like any

other organisation, profits from having a distinctive culture; a distinct set of values make it possible to belong. This may account for the fact that multinational firms tend to be mono-national in their top management. In addition, economists such as Paul Krugman and Michael Porter have pointed at the economic benefits of localised competition. Just like artisans in the past, now computer-firms like to locate in the proximity of other computer-firms for the simple reasons that their concentration in one place draws attention from potential suppliers, employees, and customers and that proximity of the competitors stimulates as well as facilitates interchange of knowledge and information. In this re-evaluation of culture and region in economics, I identify another manifestation of the neo-traditionalist spirit.

Clairvoyant this spirit is not, however. Far from it. Ambiguities, contradictions and unanswered questions abound, especially in the clashes with the post-modernist spirits. I myself am struggling with it, and get easily confused. It is almost impossible to articulate the traditions to which this spirit appeals. No matter how Dutch the Dutch are, and Rotterdamese the 'Rotterdammers', there will never be a conclusive, uncontested description of the Dutch or Rotterdamese character. Related are the problems of identifying the communities to which we belong and the identities that inform us.

What happens if other cultures enter your identity? If someone from another culture - which does not have to mean someone from abroad, think of the changes when women entered the university and gender started to play a role - what happens is that there is a conflict. The other forces me to reflect on where and to whom I belong. I am forced to re-negotiate. And when I know what my place is, I am going to assert it and we have a conflict, a fight. There are different options to deal with this fight.

Neo-traditionalism does not provide a formula for the management of local cultures against the sucking power of geocultural values. The coping with multicultural influences in a locality like Rotterdam will be a persistent problem for which there are no easy answers. Is 'creolisation', the mixing of cultures to create another, the model, or is it 'Balkanisation', the cordoning off of cultures,

as the Dutch have liked to do with their strategy of compartmentalization?

There are no fixed solutions. We can re-negotiate our situation like we do in psycho-therapy.

I myself am in favour of a mild form of creolisation - after all, that is what I am practising myself by trying to mix American elements into my Dutch life - but who am I to tell you what the model is? No-one in particular is in control.

Therefore I would recommend to respect the neo-traditionalist spirit, and thus to think and act locally while maintaining a keen interest for all that is foreign, and to move towards a sense of belonging. In that spirit, any community will stand strong to face the world in all honesty.

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17

DISCUSSION WITH
Arjo Klamer and Bazon Brock

> Awee Prins:

We have been discussing inventing cultural identity in the lecture of Bazon Brock. As Rasheed Araeen has pointed out, this invention is not a shallow political strategy. On the other hand, when I hear you speak about businesses who decide to locate their business and find specific parts of the community to do business with, I would like to ask you: inventing cultural identity, is that not more than just a marketing strategy or is there an ontological or anthropological background for this?

> Arjo Klamer:

I talked about relationships between businesses and consumers, the relationships within businesses however make a business a community. The modernist spirit, the modern management was the idea that traditional culture does not matter in business, it was science that would tell us how we should operate. You were just hired, do your things and get paid and we all would be professionals. Now people become aware that this was not a full proof method, so in the last three or four years it has become an issue on the agenda that within a business there has to be a sense of belonging. Any company, from Unilever to AT&T, they all know that people need a feeling of belonging when they work there, they need to be motivated. But how do you motivate? There are different strategies to achieve that. But a business has a story, the business community needs to have story, an anthropological story. Then they can belong to the company. People do not want to be hired, they want to have meaning. The meaning derives from relationships. What strikes me in talking to business people is that when I ask them why do you do this work, very few answer they work with that company to make profit. Young business people might say that. Most of them however want some kind of story how important he and his work are. He wants an image of being a good, even fatherlike, employer and so on.

> Heiner Holtzappel:

This is bull shit. Let us say I work at IBM and three years later I am fired, what about my identity then?

> Arjo Klamer:

If you are (no longer) part of it, that is what you say. That does not take away the reality of what people do.

> Linda Pollack:

Do you see a difference between large and small companies?

> Arjo Klamer:

The loyalties are different. For instance when you work at a university, that is an ambiguous position. As soon as you are in the highly specialized operation, no one in the organisation understands what you are doing, so there is a sort of nuisance there. Then we see this guy spending a lot of the time talking with colleagues, in or outside his company, about other, private things that have nothing to do with his work.

> Awee Prins:

Here we see the difference between corporative identity and cultural identity realising that corporative identity is something that fluctuates.

> Arjo Klamer:

I say those two things are very similar. If we talk about culture in this sphere, it is those characteristics that separate one group from another, the values, the attitudes, the stories they share.

> Bazon Brock:

You really went into the dark heart of culturalism and the economisation of culturalism.

> Arjo Klamer:

All cultures are obnoxious and alienating those who are not part of it. But that does not make them less real and does not make them less important because I would make the assertion that you and I are all neo-traditionalists at heart. We all negotiate our place. I am sure we all try to do that, in our communities, among family and friends.

> Bazon Brock:

The question 'to who do I belong' has a counterpart, namely 'who do I exclude?'.

> Arjo Klamer:

There is something so hypocritical in the way we live in our modernist spirit. Let me tell you this story. Living in America, everyday on my way from the metro to my home I came along this homeless lady. Now and then I gave her some money, almost nothing. The strange thing is that when I came home I treated my kids with an ice cream they did not need at all. There is this strange paradox. Realising that lady was very much in need and that money meant a lot to her, everyday I took the decision to spend money on my kids. One response to that is to feel guilty about it. But I realised that was not how I felt. This has to do with the question to who do I belong, that implies to whom do I have responsibilities? That means I exclude, and we do that on a massive scale. If one person here drops from his or her chair, what would we do to save him or her? But all over the world people are starving and what do we do about that? Nothing. We throw a few pennies at them through the ministry of development aid.

We discriminate on a massive scale. All that matters is if the Dutch assert right, if you have a Dutch passport, the job is yours, if not, we are sorry but the door is closed.

> Rasheed Araeen:

Suppose you are applying for a job. Another one who is applying also is from Surinam, has a Dutch passport, but the Surinam person does not get the job in spite of the fact that he has the same qualifications. That is because you belong to the Dutch society, he does not. What is your argument then?

> Arjo Klamer:

You do not understand me. I simply observe something. I observe that we all agree that the case that you present is wrong. I hope we do. But the fact is, when we have a vacancy, we are inclined to give the job to someone in our proximity and actually prefer to give it to someone we know, though that means that we exclude many others who might be much more in need of

that job than the man we know. The Dutch do this on a large scale, all Western countries do it. We discriminate on the basis of your passport which is in some way completely arbitrary, but we do. So on a world wide scale, discrimination is actually much worse than ever. The discrimination of the Surinam people in Holland and the blacks in America is nothing compared to the discrimination that is going on right now by legitimate immigration policies. The Dutch do that even stronger than the Americans I found out.

> Rasheed Araeen:
I do agree that discrimination is taking place, but I do not know where you srand. Are you justifying discrimination?

> Arjo Klamer:
Strangely enough, I am justifying it in rhe sense thar I do think that we bear responsibilities to whom we belong.

> Rasheed Araeen:
How is your position different from the position of rhe Neo-Nazis?

> Arjo Klamer:
This Hitler argument is always thrown at this point. In the United Stares there is this Jewish-Black controversy which can be terrible. We had a black professor and he started talking about rhe Jews which did not please the Jewish professors in my college. What we see in cases like this is the confrontation of the communiry with itself, and one has to renegotiate its place. This was an important discussion which could nor be solved.

> Gavin Jantjes:
I cannor find any reason on earth to justify discrimination. No matter what you say and how you try and formulate it in that kind of context. I cannot find any logical, human reason to justify discrimination. I think if you talk about the context of saying my immediate environment, my immediate cultural undersranding, I do nor think you can exclude rhe part of your immediate understanding; people like myself, and people who are from Surinam are also a part of your immediate circle of understanding. We have contributed to rhis culture, we will conrinue ro contribute to this culture, we relare to and identify with this culture. We want rhe kind of rhings that we are talking about in terms of striving rowards a new civilisation. In that conrexr, and this is the context which faces us today, rhere is absolutely no possible reason to justify discrimination.

> Bazon Brock:
I accept what Arjo Klamer described as a system of cultural argument and he is quite correct. If he relies on cultural mechanisms, then he is right in what he described.

> Gavin Jantjes:
It is not a question of description, he was talking about responsibility.

> Bazon Brock:
Mr. Klamer, you say you have no problems with it. You summed up what culturalism means to you by saying that the fight is the real thing. Of course that is the black heart of culture. As I said, every culture is the legitimation of fight that means irreversible actions towards people. You are right in describing whar culture means. That is the reason why we cannot go on arguing on culrural terms and we can no longer rely on cultural identities. I for instance am a refugee myself - my mother is French, my fathers family is from Northern Westfalia and Poland - so I could nor tell where I belong to. If I am pressed to confess my loyalty, I could only mention a few people. In your point of view, fight is the only thing.

> Bazon Brock:
We have to really understand that the way you described and argued is completely acceptable in terms of cultural belongings, identities and whatever. But we can no longer accept

that fight is the real thing. Because we ourselves will be the victims of that fight. If I take an interest in myself, I cannot dedicate myself to cultural identity and fighting for it because I will be the victim. That is what people understand more and more. For instance, all these arguments are only of any value for merchandising, for international multicultural, multinational business corporations. Because much multicultural discussion started in Germany with big firms like Krupp, who asked people from Italy and Portugal to do the work Germans did not want to do, it was an invention of the economy and the tragedy is that humanistic interests, the Green Parties and socialist representatives argue in exactly the same way as the corporations are arguing. Both use this kind of where do you belong, what is your cultural heritage and so on. That is the tragedy of today. The argument which you described properly, is only useful for this economic system. Everybody can understand that he is a victim of this system if taking it seriously. If I accept it, I am the victim. Multiculturalism or culturalism is the ideology of those who have no reason to fear the fight. Culturalism means ghettoes. Ghetroes used to be for the poor, expelled and excluded. Now it is completely different.

> Arjo Klamer:

Mr. Brock, that is your side of the issue. It is dialectic. If you deny your culture, then you are a wanderer who is lost in the world. You are a person who is lost, who does not know how to deal with the situation, you do not have a sense of belonging to a certain place. I do not like to feel and to think that way, I do not like being in airports, I do not like this endless wandering which was nice for a while but at this moment I discover that does not serve me well. I have to know my place which does not necessarily mean a geographical place, but a place from where I can operate.

> Heiner Holtzappel:

There is a big contradiction in the whole story. First you started with globalisation. Then you say you have the answer, people have to be responsible in particular to whom they belong to and to who enters their world. But your world is entered by a problem. How can you find a structure for global problems, like ecological problems, when you stick to the cultural roots which are based on exclusion? Bazon Brock came up with civilisation instead of culturalism because civilisation means there is nothing to exclude. How can we talk about humanism if we are not able to guarantee the basic things of civilisation which are education, health and food?

> Arjo Klamer:

It is nice to say these things, and I would like to use that rhetoric too. We all are one human race, I would like to preach that as well. But in reality, I face my limitations as an individual not being able to deal with the problems of the world as I once thought I was supposed to do. Being an economist, trying to get rid of unemployment in the world, now I realise that is not in my power. So should I feel guilty? No, I say instead of thinking about the world as my village, I have to realise that I am limited in my capacities but there is a challenge in that too.

> Rasheed Araeen:

We all discriminate, I accept that argument in that context. But to imply from that in the end that it is natural for human beings to be culturalists because you belong to a place, rhat is unacceptable. You are talking about problems in far places in the world. You are not talking about the problems in Europe, problems you cannot detach from Dutch society which are the byproducts of Dutch society. You cannot say you are not part of these problems.

> Arjo Klamer:

I admire people like you, who dare to wander.

> Berndt M. Scherer:

In trying to reconstruct this discussion, I understand that the problem of the position of Arjo Klamer is not the description of the facts, that there are groups and fights between them. The problem is that he seems to justify it, so the question is related to your normative framework. The other position, if I understand Bazon Brock correctly, is: if we have a

universalistic approach, then we have a normative framework in which we can justify our acts. And only on this level can we develop a normative framework in which we can live in the long run. That is the discussion. I would like to ask if you can go one step further than Klamer has suggested up to now. It seems as if you conclude a notmative framework directly from yout description. You say there are these groups and they might fight each other, but what you try to make us think is that the anthropological concept which underlies a universalistic apptoach is not the right one. So we should think about the anthropological concept we have: on the one hand there is the individual and on the other hand the univetse, there is nothing in between, like social groups. That is not a right anthropological concept and the notmative actions drawn from it do not cover the anthropologic situation.

> Arjo Klamer:

I realise in listening to you that I emphasize the normative too much. I take that back. I was only trying to observe things that go on in my environment and intellectual and artistic citcles. I observe that we form cultures and are not able to include everybody in this world. You too write books that some of us can read, others not, they ate excluded. That is reality. I do not engage with a lot of things that are presented on my television. If I can get recognition from you that we deal with this, my next step is the question whether we should feel guilty about it ot that it is just human in the sense of belonging to, the need to be recognised and to tecognize instead of being one great mass. I am not ready to give up my position. I am not pleased with civilisation when I hear you talking about it. It is so universalising and that does not help me. I am the last one to deny the value of this intercultutal reaction. I am not a fundamentalist, an isolationist or a provincial person because I treasure the interactions I had with all these people from different places. Do not misrake me, but still I come back to this question that I think we can deal with it in a positive way and that is the question to who do I belong to. This is a necessary question in a time when so many people are lost, when everything is relativised and ironised. This post modernist move causes gteat damage to all kinds of individuals. My wife as a therapist tries to find the story of those people. As soon as you have a story, you have a place.

> Gavin Jantjes:

You need to come back to your community in order to be able to live with the world. It seems that that culture has a fixity. But when you came back from the United States you found the culture changed and felt in a nomansland. This is an indication for cultural development. Negotiating means including these changes and in that sense the concept of national identity is a big illusion, it keeps slipping through our fingers for everyday it is different.

(18)

THE ARTIST
AS A POSTCOLONIAL SUBJECT AND ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST WESTERN CULTURAL DOMINATION

Rasheed Araeen

What I'm going to present to you today is not directly related to the theme of this symposium. But it has a relevance which in my view must be recognised if we are to understand that Western cultural dominance, which is one of the themes of this symposia, is not always explicit or direct. It often asserts its influence through its institutional discourse which appears to operate on benevelent humanist considerations but at the same time it is also used to legitimate or delegitimate art depending upon whether it conforms to or challenges its authority.

I was initially asked to present a paper on the theme of "The Dominance of Western Culture", but then I was shifted to what's todays theme, "Cities without Borders", which has put me in a somewhat confused situation, although both the themes are closely interrelated. Moreover, when I received the invitation to come here, I was extremely busy and it would have been impossible for me to write a proper paper. But I was very keen to come to Rotterdam and take part in this debate, even when I was fed up with all this talk about multiculturalism. So, I wrote back saying that I wanted to present myself as an artist and talk about my own work, and show how it's possible to deal with the question of Western dominance within one's own art practice. So, that's what I'm going to do. It's going to be a sort of collage of text and visual material.

My presentation has two parts. In the first part I will raise some points regarding the problems of so-called multiculturalism in the visual arts. The second part deals with my own work as an artist and shows how my work developed from one face to another and its significance in the context of the changing nature of our world today.

Three years ago I gave a talk in Rotterdam in which I tried to argue that the invisibility of artists from other cultures had little to do with the problems of cultural differences, which emerged in postwar Europe as a result of immigration to Europe of peoples from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. It's therefore important to look at the cause of this invisibility somewhere else. A glance at the art institutional structures in the West will show that these structures were formed during the West's colonial empires and they are still entangled in the web of its imperial legacies. The dialectics of liberation from colonialism, whether political, economic or cultural, demands that both the colonised and coloniser liberate themselves at the same time. But, unfortunately, the West has not yet undergone this historical process; its institutions have not undergone the process of decolonisation and are still maintaining an imperialist worldview as a result of West's continuing political, economic and cultural world domination.

This has lead to a neocolonial situation, often called postcoloniality, in which there is a refusal to recognise the others as historical subjects, as part of historically transforming processes of modernity. Instead they are pushed to a new marginality of multiculturalism, in which cultural differences are seen as authentic expressions of various communities in Europe, justified by the desires of these communities to preserve their own cultural traditions. This desire is understandable, given the hostile European environemenr in which the new immigrants often find themselves. But this does not mean rhat individuals from these communities are trapped forever within their own cultural boundaries and are unable ro experience rhe world outside these boundaries, particularly when these experiences are concerned with what leads to the production of art.

The problem with the policies of multiculturalism, or theories of cultural diversity, is that they have failed to address the main issue of art as an individual practice rather than an expression of community as a whole, or art as an expression of an individual who has freed himself or herself from the 4 constraints of the culture as a whole.

To be more specific, it's important not only to make a distinction between collective cultural manifestations of a community and an individual production of art, but to recognise that there may exist a problematic relationship between the collective and the individual, to the point of creating a rupture between the two. This has always been recognised in the case of the Western individual, but this modern subjectiviry is continued to be denied to the others even after the philosophical basis on which the colonial separation between the Self and the Other was maintained has collapsed. In fact, the colonial Other has moved out of its colonial boundaries and has entered the space which was once exclusively occupied by the Western artist.

What is most worrying is the fact that even the postcolonial discourse which engages with arr does not somehow recognise that this movement from the periphery to the centre does not necessarily involve cultural difference or depend on the dynamics of one's specific culture. It's no wonder that

there is now so much talk about liminality, a mythical space between the periphery and the centre through which the postcolonial artist must pass before he/she becomes a fully recognised historical subject. This has got the art institutions in the West off the hook and provided them a new framework by which the other could be contained and at the same time celebrated on the basis of his or her difference. In other words, multiculturalism has become a new institutional strategy of containment.

The historical responsibility of the postcolonial artist is not just ro enter the space which was forbidden to him or her before, and demand a legitimation of his or her work based on a specific experience of the world, but ro rransform that space in such a way that it confronts the legacies of the colonial discourse which is fundamental to Western modernity. It's therefore important to persisr in an arristic integrity of the liberated historical subject, and thus to challenge those forces which are erecting new structures, whatever you may call them, multiculturalism, cultural plurality or hybridity to constrain or conrrol an artistic endeavour or aspiration on the basis of cultural differences. It's my view that art cannot be produced by a theory which predetermines its cultural framework. Art carries its own framework determined not only by the historically changing social conditions but also by its own conditions of production as a specific cultural discipline. If the imperial hangups of the dominant art system prevent us from recognising a historically determined framework for all artists, irrespective of the difference of race, colour or creed, then this system must be questioned and make it recognise the historical reality of postcolonial human liberation and individual freedom. The journey of the so called other artist, from the periphery to the centre, has been parr of the struggle to realise an individual freedom beyond the constraints of a specific culture or national boundaries.

II

I will now show you, through an example of my own work, that this journey of the 'other' artist towards the centre did not produce a loss. In its persistence to challenge modern precursors, it did not stop

at the threshold of modernity, even when this threshold offered a lucrative career to an exotic artist. Its destination was determined by a legitimate artistic ambition which considers its responsibilty to challenge and change the course of history. This journey begins at the place of my birth which now is in a country called Pakistan. I would like to go through part of this artistic journey which has not yet ended, and share with you its memories.

I was born in Katachi, Pakistan. In the mid 50s, when I was 20, I came across modern art and became fascinated by it. But I had no idea then that this fascination would lead me to a lifelong commitmenr to art. My ambition at the time was to become a modern architect, but there was no school of architecture in Karachi. And my parents were not rich enough to send me abroad for education. So I studied civil engineering, while continuing making art as a hobby.

But in 1959, while I was still studying civil engineering, I began to produce experimental work in architecture, painting and sculpture, the modernity of which surprised me. So I decided to be a professional artist. The ideas which underlie my early work in Karachi were seminal and remained the basis of my subsequent work over the last 35 years.

In 1964, I left Karachi to live in Europe because it was becoming vety difficult for me to continue exploring new ideas in art and live as an artist in my own counrry. In a milieu of neocolonialism in which only mediocrity which was often a pale imitation of what was done in the West was recognised and privileged, it almost became impossible to be innovative. Abstract expressionism in fact came to Karachi in 1959 and immediately had its imitators who ate still around as successful artists.

On arrival in London in June 1964, I was confronted with a situation which was intellectually exciting and opened a way for me to place myself firmly in the evolutionary process of Modernism in the 20th century. As soon as I saw the work of sculptor Anthony Caro, I became fascinated with the way he used industrial material such as steel girders etc., and it gave me a starting point for my own work. However, I did not want to be Cato's follower. My ambition was to go beyond what was prevailing. But this couldn't be possible without criticising and tejecting

the vety conceptual basis of making modernist sculpture which continued to be compositional, pictorial and hierarchical. Modern sculpture needed to be freed from gestural 'expressionism' and irrationality of trial and error methods. I had to find a new concept that would redefine modern sculpture in terms of a historical breakthrough or a radical shift. In 1965, I hit upon an idea by arranging steel girders in a symmetrical order, and that was the emergence of Minimal sculpture in Britian, which happened to coincide with a similar development in New York which is universally recognised as a histotical development.

My entry and taking up a forward position in the history of modernism was due to my experience of myself as a free subject. But this created a problem for the dominant discourse because of its continuing imperial perception of Modern Art History, from which all those who are not Europeans must be excluded to maintain its Euro ethnocentric Hegelian model.

This realization that I was outside history was shattering for me. For some time, I lost all my self-confidence and the urge to create. I became a political activist with a belief that radical political activity was more effective than art in dealing with such a situation. Although my aim was to bring together art and politics, I soon realized that politics had its own rules and limitations, which seldom understood the complexity of an artistic endeavour and its importance. So I returned to artistic activity, realizing that there was an important struggle to be waged within art, not only in terms of questioning and changing the prevailing dominant framework of artistic practice, but also in finding a language which was not subservient to the dominant model, which was also free from the burdon of merely representing what is undetstood by politics.

In the 70's my work went thtough many stages: it sometimes moved linearly and other times in a to and fro method. The struggle has always been to find a language which would express my own expetience of life, but at the same time would also be located 'within' the dynamic of the historical space in which this experience takes place. I found that this expetience could not be expressed within the modernity of a monolithic formal structure, for it is unable to signify the

multiplicity of a experience which is not located in one culture.

The artistic language ot art form that I have developed since early 80's expresses the multiplicity of one's being ot living in a world which is no longer rigidly demarcated according to national boundaries. The work is not a simple juxtaposition of Western or Eastern icons, as some critics in the West have implied. The nine panels work is the result of cutting, rupturing and polluting the putity of the dominant paradigm. Fitst I make a rectangular minimalist space or panel, often painted green (an allusion to nature/taw/young/immature/underdeveloped, etc. -all these words are taken from an English dictionary), which is cut vertically and horizontally, and then I move the four panels apart forming an empty space ot cruciform. This cruciform is filled with matetial which is incongruent to the purity of minimalism. What is most important in this work is not merely the meaning of iconic images but their spatial location within the whole configuration. In other words, the sacred is polluted and turned into something whose significance can only be understood in terms of a penetration of one reality into another.

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BEYOND EXOTICISM,
ETHNIC CHAUVINISM AND
FACELESS UNIVERSALISM

Ria Lavrijsen

Last March I published an article in the "Boekmancahier", a Dutch quarterly on cultural policy and research, on 'cultural diversity and audience participation'. In fact this article was a rather critical reaction on a survey carried out by the Amsterdam Office for Research and Statistics on the issue of participation in the performing arts by immigrant/ethnic minority 18-30 year-olds in 1994 and 2005. This survey tells us that the participation percentage for immigrants in 2005 will remain virtually the same. The researchers state that over the last ten years the level of education within the migrant communities has not increased, and that it is expected that it will not increase over the coming ten years. So nothing really is to be expected in terms of participation. This simplistic conclusion drawn by the O&S survey stigmatises immigrants/ethnic minority groups and has, in my opinion, a paralysing effect on the art sector. Only when we cease to consider immigrants as a statistical average, and instead view them as richly varied groups, influenced by generation, background and social structure, creative ideas for an updated cultural and arts policy can emerge.

In the survey, there is a lack of differentiated figures on the educational standard of immigrants/ethnic minorities. The researchers only consider average percentages and ignore the fact that over the next ten years the total number (in an absolute sense) of better-educated Surinamese, Antillians, Turks and Moroccans will rise. They ignore the fact that there is a social mobility taking place within these migrant communities. That the 'average' educational standard is not increasing, is among others the result of an ongoing influx of sometimes illiterate or not very highly educated migrants. But the researchers in fact consider the migrant community as a 'homogenous' poorly educated community.

The researchers have worked with generalised concepts such as 'immigrants' and have overlooked the public's diverse frames of references. Participation in art appears to have a chance of success if a connection with people's frame of reference is sought. And it is the challenge of our time to gain more understanding of people's contemporary frame of reference, which may be complex and ambiguous at the same time.

We know that the standard of education plays a role in art participation. But we have to recognise that other factors are relevant as well: factors connected with family environment, social background, geographical location et cetera. It would be silly not to recognise that audiences from various cultures have different histories and possess different kinds of 'cultural capital'. But it would be even more silly to suggest that 'ethnicity' or 'race' is the essence of a person's 'cultural identity'.

The greatest challenge for all of us is to make a thorough investigation of the complexity of the varied migrant and autochthonous communities and the social and cultural differences within as well as between these communities. Dealing with 'cultural difference' does not mean dealing with ethnicity but with social, cultural, economical and historical 'differences', and the issues of gender and generation as well.

VARIOUS CULTURAL POLICY OPTIONS

Of course there is a variety of cultural policy options. I will discuss three options which may be useful for the debate on 'interculturalism', 'cultural diversity' and 'cultural difference'.

The first option is a specific policy regarding people with a low socio-economic status and/or ethnic groups whose objective is to compensate people who, for a variety of historical reasons - migration, racism, colonial oppression, sexism, and class-discrimination - may require supplementary schemes. A policy to diminish the arrears of specific groups, to free them from cultural deprivation (positive action).

A problem here is that this kind of policy should be aimed at 'disadvantaged communities in general' but that in practice it is often specifically aimed at 'ethnic' groups. And not everybody is, quite understandably, in favour of registering 'ethnicity'.

The problem with this kind of policy is also that it suggests to compensate various groups of people - men and women - but that in reality 'ethnicity' becomes a central criterium to make a distinction between groups of people and communities. If this distinction is combined with the idea that various ethnic groups have their own fixed identity and that this identity has to be maintained by the conservation and cultivation of cultures, it becomes even more dangerous.

The ultimate consequence of the idea that our society is to be divided into ethnic segments, whose cultures have to be represented in separate slots within the national cultural scene, is segregation (some people say 'apartheid'). Paul Gilroy a writer, sociologist and cultural critic recently presented a keynote speech in Amsterdam during a conference on 'Chances for Enrichment - Performing Arts from a

multicultural perspective'. Gilroy feels we must give up the illusion that cultural and ethnic purity have ever existed. In his speech, he warned for the fact that some of Europe's oldest romances with the primitives and the noble savages are being rekindled.

Gilroy: '....imprisoning the other in this fantasy of innocence can only be catastrophic for all parties involved. The danger is compounded when the interests of the romantic consumers converge with those of people inside the minority communities who want to enforce a particular definition of invariant and therefore authentic ethnicity for their own dubious disciplinary reasons.'

'There is a greater danger when absolutism is unthinkingly endorsed by public sector and creative institutions eager to use an ossified sense of ethnic differences as a means to rationalise their own practice and judgements.'

BINARY DIVISIONS

Not so long ago, a research was published in The Netherlands on 'Ethnicity and cultural participation', a research on participation by members of ethnic groups of cultural expressions in the Netherlands. This research was carried out by the 'Foundation Studia Interetnica' and was commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Culture. In this report a distinction is being made between the 'ethnic specific' culture on the one hand and the general Dutch culture on the other hand. As you can understand, I felt rather disturbed when this binary division was being introduced, in this case by a researcher of Surinamese background.

When the report was presented, I asked whether the researcher, Mr. Campbell, could give a definition of 'ethnic specific culture'. I myself gave several examples of artists working in the Netherlands and I asked if their work were to be identified as examples of 'ethnic specific culture' or if their work was part and parcel of general contemporary Dutch culture. I gave the example of Ali «ifteci, an actor and singer of Turkish descent who last year made a music theatre production about the Turkish poet Pir Sultan. Fons Merkies, a Dutch composer, had composed new contemporary music. Ali was playing saz during the performance, indeed a musical instrument you often see in Turkey. And Ali sang in Turkish. I consider however this production as part of the heterogeneous

Dutch culture.

In the context of contemporary art, I question the naming 'ethnic specific art'. I think Paul Gilroy rightly showed his scepticism when he was criticizing people who pretend that ethnicity is something that belongs exclusively to the minority. There is a great need to be alert to any kind of myth building by members of the majorities, as well as by members of the minorities. If there is one lesson to be learned from the war in former Yugoslavia, it is that nobody gains from myth building and ethnic chauvinism.

ASSIMILATION

Another policy some people may like to promote is a policy of assimilation. Defenders of this kind of policy feel that the 'multicultural' issue is being solved when people in general and artists from different cultures and nations in particular adjust to the dominant national and European culture(s). In this view, migrant artists will have to adjust to European based definitions of quality and ways of communication in the arts and in the art schools. You may however wonder whether there is something like a homogeneous national or European culture. In fact, artists are - through a policy of assimilation - being forced to deny their 'double' frame of reference, their complex histories, their aesthetics, their 'cultural capital' which may be 'Western' and 'non-Western' at the same time.

DOUBLE PERSPECTIVE

The difficulty with the approach of the already mentioned 'double' perspective however, is that it may again 'impose' a kind of one dimensional, stereotypical idea of 'migrant-art': he or she is a migrant artist and we all expect him or her to make art about 'the conflict between cultures', being a 'displaced person', nostalgia, the shared group experience of migrants et cetera.

Only two weeks ago I organised a festival on literature in a changing Europe with the title: In'Other' Words in Amsterdam. In the introduction of the brochure I wrote: 'The placing of the word other in quotation marks in the title is of significance because the question remains whether the work of 'other' writers is indeed quite different from that of their Western European colleagues. Universal themes such as love, life and death play an

important role in their work. But it is equally not surprising that their work broaches subjects such as the pain of work in exile, the struggles with the 'new' home and often with a new language.' One of the aims of the project was to stimulate the debate on the heterogeneous character of European literature. The writers who presented their work on Saturday night chose their own texts. Only some of the work of these writers touched explicitly on the themes of 'migration', most of the work did not.

Ellen Ombre read her story 'Maalstroom' in which the main theme is the relation between a mother in Surinam and her son in the Netherlands. Snezana Bukal read a small story about her two grandfathers. Hafid Bouazza presented a text in which he explores the erotic connotations of vegetables such as cucumber and eggplant. Andy Ninvalle told in a rhythmic poetic and impacting language how he grew up in a poor family in British-Guyana. To mention just a few examples.

The artistic quality and the so called 'specificity' of these texts give them the potency of being 'universal' stories and poems. In this context, it is interesting to listen to a quotation by T.S. Eliot: 'Universality can never come except through writing about what one knows thoroughly..... And, though it is only too easy for a writer to be local without being universal, I doubt whether a poet or novelist can be universal without being local too.

What we may bear in mind is this: in the end it is the artist, and in the case of the "'Other' Words project", it is the writer himself who decides what and how to write and how to use or ignore the so called 'double' perspective. The cultural sector will have to learn how to deal in a creative way with the heterogeneous character of our cultures. At the same time, we have to be aware that policy makers do not impose or prescribe in which direction artists should work. Migrant artists are part of modern European culture and we have to get used to the idea that the artists themselves are the ones who are deciding on how to make works of art. 'I will never serve my nation. I will only serve literature' says Dubravka Ugreöi_, a writer from Zagreb, in the weekly 'De Groene Amsterdammer' (2 February 1994).

At least one thing became very clear during the 'Other' Words-project: that you can never expect a writer to write or to speak

on behalf of any 'ethnic' community. Another thing that became clear is that writers, who have either themselves or through their parents an experience with migration, introduce other visions and perspectives in their novels and stories. If I had the power to decide on the books that should be part of the national curriculum in the United Kingdom, I would suggest for instance Caryl Phillips' novel 'Cambridge' to become part of the national canon.

One of the aims of the 'Other' Words-project was to stimulate the debate on the heterogeneous character of European literature. When I heard that Dutch-Surinamese writer and essayist Anil Ramdas was publishing his most challenging keynote speech in the NRC Handelsblad, I was very enthusiastic because I knew that his text was going to trigger a debate.

THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Anil Ramdas suggested in his keynote speech for the 'Other' Words opening event that the migrants obsession with 'identity' may be an obstacle in his development. In relation to cultural institutions he remarked: 'Instead of smothering migrants in their memories and their tradition - however romantic and idyllic that may seem from the outside - they could create a climate in which their cultural background was inconsequential. Migrants are disadvantaged, that is true. They are misunderstood and ignored. But precisely because of this they need all their time and energy not to develop their identity, but to develop their character.'

The question however is: is it possible to develop your character (and your personality) if you do not have an identity or if you do not know where you come from? And is it not true that 'cultural background', class or gender, are playing a role in this process of character building? Maybe it is the 'burden' of our time that a lot of people throughout the world are obsessed with questions concerning 'cultural identity', not only migrants.

It may sound paradoxical but I feel the art world cannot ignore the fact that part of the debate of European's modern cultural life and part of the debate on 'new internationalism' is the fact that artists do have very different personal and historical experiences and do come from a variety of nations, cultures, classes and families. To

suggest that we are all part of one big harmonious universal family is rather simplistic and not very helpful. As a woman from a working class background, I know very well that in our liberal and democratic society some people who are born with a silver spoon in their mouth on lots of occasions seem to be more equal than others.

It is true that a part of the feminist movement spend her energy on 'fighting against men', and it is true that some people from black or migrant communities spend all their energy on 'fighting against white people or eurocentrism'. I personally feel that this is a way of spoiling one's energy. I must say I agree with Anil Ramdas when he is pleading for a concentration on the question of where you are heading and who you want to be. A black writer certainly does not gain a lot by spending all his energy on fighting against whites instead of developing the skill to write.

The question however of who you are and where you come from, is for Anil Ramdas less relevant. And it is there that I disagree. It is rather interesting to see that in fact Anil Ramdas is proving quite the opposite through his own work. He himself is of a Hindu-Surinamese background. How come and why is it that he writes about the Hindu community, about Indian film, about Salman Rushdie and V.S. Naipaul? Why does he make television interviews with Edward Said and Bell Hooks, intellectuals who write and think about the effects of colonialism, discrimination, sexism, diaspora, migration, or contemporary culture?

You only have to know the paintings and drawings of a visual artist such as Marlene Dumas or the books written by the black British writer Caryl Phillips to realize that besides the crucial artistic issues concerning form and style, it does matter 'who you are and where you come from'. It, sadly enough, does matter that you are a woman or a man.

I now come back to the third option of cultural policy.

INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE

A third option in cultural policy making could be a policy aiming at integration and heterogeneity, intercultural exchange et cetera. The basis of this policy is the idea that a society cannot be divided into ethnic segments but is made up of communities and

individuals with their specific historical, cultural, social and economical backgrounds. People supporting this view will recognize that 'cultural identities' are being influenced by a variety of factors: ethnicity; aspects of the culture of the old mother country and the new homeland; class; sex; religious orientation; sexual orientation; aspects of rural/urban cultures; historical and personal experiences, generation et cetera. Ideally, these differences exist in a pluralist society in a non-hierarchical line. In our time we see a process in which the national and European 'ethnic' cultures as well as the lives of the various so called 'ethnic' minority communities are undergoing a process of change. Processes of inter-mixture and hybridisation are taking place, even if certain people do not want them to take place.

To stimulate a process of critical judgement and evaluation of hybridisation and creolisation, we need to encourage a dialogue between intelligent and well qualified people with various frames of references, various 'cultural capitals' and historical backgrounds. Whether these intelligent people are white or black, men or women, is indeed less important for me.

BEAUTY AND ETHICAL CRITERIA

In my opinion, one of the people in the world of art that tries to deal in a creative and sensitive way with the contemporary debate on 'new internationalism' is the French curator, Catherine David. She will be curating the tenth 'Documenta' in Kassel which will take place in 1997. She is the first woman in the history of the Documenta to curate this visual arts show of global significance, which in itself is no mean achievement. But what is most interesting about Catherine David is not that she is a woman, but that she is a curator with a challenging vision. In 1987, as director of the Jeu de Paume in Paris, she and some colleagues were curators of the thoroughly debated exhibition 'L'Epoque, la mode, la morale, la passion'. In this exhibition, for which Catherine David used a line of Baudelaire's 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', she wanted to pay attention to the fact that, besides the 'eternal' and traditional values such as beauty, there are other considerations such as time-related and ethical values, fashion, moral and passion, all of which play a crucial part in the arts. The achievement of

Modernism may have been the establishment of the autonomy of artistic criteria. However in the modern world, there is a debate acknowledging the fact that time-related, ethical and non-aesthetic criteria have been discarded in the arrogant moments of high Modernism. My personal opinion is that neither the exclusive and absolutist appreciation of autonomous aesthetic criteria nor the exclusive appreciation of the time-related and ethical criteria are fruitful approaches in the debates on art. Maybe a combination of the two is the way out.

When I am talking about 'ethics' I want to stress the fact that I am not talking here about a kind of petit-bourgeois moralism. A writer, an artist must have the space and freedom to make art out of any subject. During my summer holidays one day I was reading Nabokov's Lolita': a great literary work in which you meet a character, Mr. Humbert Humbert, who is strongly attracted by a little nymph, a thirteen year old girl. Nabokov writes this story in a way that the reader can sense and even understand Mr. Humberts rather trivial and grotesque 'amour fou'. To write about this kind of 'love' does not mean however that Nabokov is a defender of love affairs between adult men and young girls. Many 'critics' who where at the time in favour of censorship in the case of Lolita, have not understood that Nabokov contributes with his book to a deep reflection on moral and ethics. After Nabokov's Lolita, I read the novel 'Cambridge' by Caryl Phillips, a British writer from a Caribbean background. Phillips sets his novel in the uneasy time between the abolition of the slave trade and the emancipation of the slaves. Part of the book is the story of Emily Cartwright, a young woman sent from England to visit her father's West-Indian plantation. Phillips creates an Emily who cannot accept to sit at the dinner table with a black person. At the same time however, Emily is showing her scepticism towards the rudeness of a slave master on a West-Indian plantation. It is the very special and subtle literary style and this moving combination of inhumanity and humanity that enables the reader to become almost a 'character' in Caryl Phillips' novel. Phillips pushes the reader to a reflection on morality and ethics in the 19th century.

It is this confusion about fiction and reality, the confusion about moral ethics on

the one hand and 'moralism' on the other hand, that has brought Salman Rushdie in this position where his life and his freedom of speech are being threatened.

VARIOUS MODERNITIES

I want to come back once more to Catherine David and her ideas. I had the pleasure of meeting Catherine David in December 1992 at a conference in Rotterdam where she gave a lecture with the title: *'A Reawakened Interest in Other Culture: Urgency or Alibi?'*. In her lecture she focused on the crucial issue of 'modernity'. Let us hear what she said:

'I think it is very dangerous to go on claiming that modernity is a particularly Western invention and story, and that it has affected the others only on the rebound or by borrowing or reproduction. I believe that modernity has touched everyone...'

Modernity has touched everyone and Catherine David feels that it is crucial to acknowledge the very many different ways and manners it has touched people within the West itself, as well as in Africa, Asia, the Middle East et cetera. This view may cause a small revolution, because it means that she refuses to take the West-European and American canon as the only and exclusive criterium. Catherine David - and I would strongly agree with her here - is pleading for a new sensitivity and approach whereby we start looking at the way in which other communities have experienced modernity, even if those experiences originate from compulsion and traumatisation. At this point I want to state how crucial it is to try and understand the dynamics within the 'cultures' of migrant communities in for instance, Rotterdam. One of the mistakes policy makers often make is to label these cultures as 'ethnic cultures'. We all know that 'modernity' and 'modern aesthetics' in some parts of the world were shaped somehow differently compared to that in other parts of the world because of historical, political and cultural reasons. We all know that Dutch, British, German and other Europeans coming from rural areas, working class or poor families have experienced other kinds of 'modernities' compared with people in cities and youngsters who grew up in intellectual enlightened environments. If we try to understand the various modernities of our

parents and of ourselves, why should we then not try to understand the various modernities of migrant communities whose origin or whose parents' origin is outside Europe?

EXOTICISM

For a long time, we as Europeans have been interested in non-Western arts and cultures. However, very often we wanted to see the 'other' cultures as exotic, traditional, tribal and pure. With the modernisation of the world we started worrying about the way non-Western cultures would be influenced and how cultural traditions in Africa and Asia might be damaged, or even disappear, through this process of modernisation. In the meantime our own Western cultures changed tremendously through industrialisation and modernity. While we considered the cultural changes in our Western culture as part of our progress and the dynamics of Western culture, we asked the non-Western cultures to preserve their pure and sacred traditions. Let us have a closer look at just two cases which occurred recently in the world of art in The Netherlands and Belgium.

Fra Fra Sound, a Dutch band which plays Afro-Caribbean jazz with musicians of Surinamese, British, and Latin-American descent, is I think an interesting band because of the hybrid and cross-cultural orientation and the search of a mixture of musical styles such as salsa, kaseko, jazz and South African kwela. I do not hesitate to characterise this band as a Dutch band because I consider their music as a very valuable contribution to culturally diverse Dutch music life. It is part of the heterogeneous national music of the Netherlands. An advisory committee of the Foundation for the Performing Arts reacted to their application for subsidy with the following words:

'...The importance of the band is primarily aimed at giving young Surinamese musicians a chance to be introduced to this kind of music. The commission regrets that there is increasingly less effort being made on the backgrounds of Surinamese music. The group is heading too much into the direction of a Fusion band. It is therefore in danger of losing its original purpose, without having gained a new one.'
Vincent Henar, the Fra Fra Sound band leader, who is black Dutch from a

Surinamese background, regards this counsel as: 'an attempt at limiting us, and Surinamese musicians in general, in our artistic choices and 'sending us back to the bush as it were'.

Another example of 'exoticism' is the following. In March of last year (1994) the Belgian newspaper, De Standaard, published a review by music critic Vic De Donder about a performance of The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Flanders in The Concertgebouw in Amsterdam conducted by the Afro-American conductor Michael Morgan. 'A black man can also conduct Mahler' read the headline of the Standaard. In his review, Vic De Donder wrote about the conductor:

'His frail appearance and typically negroid mannerisms would sooner lead you to expect him to start singing (negro)spirituals, than to conduct a large symphonic orchestra. Notwithstanding he conducted the Flemish Philharmonic with a firm hand'.

When the director of The Royal Philharmonic of Flanders wrote to this music critic that he was shocked, De Donder was surprised about the perception of his review. He had only meant to describe the atmosphere. How sweet, is it not?

Rasheed Ataeen, British-Pakistani writer and visual artist in the UK, has been criticising this attitude towards the 'other' for some time. He writes:

'By attributing a very different social and historical space to the non European peoples, they are turned into the 'others'. First, the 'other' is reduced to the level of a victim, then the West looks in the 'other' for some kind of purity and authenticity; the result is the promotion and legitimation of exotic cultures or art activities which are pre-modern or are removed from the discourse of modernism.'

If we do not want to locate the 'other' artist in a pre-modern world, if we do not want to push him/her into a space of 'folkloristic expressions' or 'ethnic arts' or a slot where only collective experiences count and if we do not want to deny the 'other' artist his individual aspiration and ambition, we should create the same space for the so called 'other' artist that we do for the so called Western artist. If we manage to do so, new perspectives will open up. I suppose in the fields of arts and culture there is no room for 'ethnic chauvinism'.

FACELESS UNIVERSALISM

Besides the 'exotic' attitude you find another kind of attitude which, I feel, is as insensitive as the one I have been trying to describe. I would call this attitude - in the words of the Afro-American writer and thinker Cornel West - the one of 'faceless universalism'. But before I continue to reflect on this phenomenon of 'faceless universalism', I want to acknowledge the possibility of sharing certain values as universal values. I do believe that in many cases it is possible for people who have different histories and who come from different cultures, to share, appreciate and understand each others' aesthetics and works of art. I do not therefore want to say that there are no universal values at all. Let us for instance think of Toni Morrison, the Afro-American writer and Nobel Prize Winner. Her books can be read and understood by people who did not experience slavery and racism themselves. Morrison's characters are so fully human that she enables us as readers to share their emotions and to appreciate her work.

I now want to return to this phenomenon of 'faceless universalism'. As I tried to make clear, I do acknowledge that certain universal values can be shared. But it would be rather naive to think that we as West-Europeans are always open and non prejudiced towards art and cultural expressions of the 'other'. It would be rather naive to think that we can always understand and appreciate all signs and symbols of all cultures without being informed about the specificities of people's histories and cultures. It would be rather naive to think that we are all part of one harmonious global world, where the diversity of cultures is being shared through absolutist universal values and without any tension, competition or inequalities involved. As Homi Bhabha points out in an interview I had with him: 'It is utopian to imagine that all the walls of all the great museums would somehow crumble and we could have festivals in the park or community art centres, as if those would be free spaces or non-ideological spaces.'

It is crucial to recognise that art and art institutions and the assessment of art are closely related to existing canons, decision-makers, and their power. According to

French sociologist Bourdieu, intellectuals, scientists and artists ought not to strive for economic interest in the first place, but their activities are often not as unselfish as they want to make us believe. In the arts, as well as everywhere else, you find competition, prestige battles, immaterial and material interests.

But before I become too 'politically correct', I must confess that I hate that term as much as I hate any other chauvinism, be that class, or ethnic chauvinism. The oppressed, however much compassion I feel for them, do not naturally occupy the moral highground. The absolutist and binary divisions between men/women, white/black, oppressed/oppressor and self/other are in my opinion not very fruitful. At the same time, however, - and I realise that this sounds like a paradox - I feel we urgently need to rethink questions such as: whose stories are we going to listen to, whose books are we going to publish and read, whose works of art are we going to exhibit in our museums, which plays and concerts are we going to programme and which audiences are we going to serve, or what kind of students are we going to educate? Or, in Rotterdam, which communities are going to be served, who is going to get the resources for social and cultural development? It is not possible to define national cultures as homogenous cultures, so we unavoidably have to think about how to approach the issues concerning the intercultural and the cross-cultural.

A starting point may be: curiosity, mutual respect and a subtle combination of engagement, commitment and critical distance. An indifferent cultural relativism belongs to lazy minds.

Ria Lavrijsen has been working in journalism and broadcasting and is currently writing on 'interculturalism and art policy'. She initiated and organized a number of international projects.

FOOT-NOTES]

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2. T.S. Eliot 1965: p. 55, 56. Quoted in 'Toward the decolonization of African Literature'.

3. Anil Ramdas. De overbodigheid van een culturele identiteit. The superfluousness of a cultural identity. Speech for: In 'Other' words - Literature in a changing Europe'. September 8, 1995, Royal Tropical Institute Amsterdam. Published in Dutch in NRC Handelsblad September 9, 1995.

4. Sarat Maharaj in 'Cultural Diversity in the Arts', ed. Ria Lavrijsen, Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, 1993, p.89.

5. Catherine David, 'A Reawakened Interest in Other Cultures: Urgency or Alibi?', in: MED URBS VIE, The authentic contemporary art from countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Turkey and its presentation in Europe. Rotterdam, Rotterdamse Kunstichting 1993, p. 46.

6. Fonds voor de Podiumkunsten 1994.

7. Vincent Henar's reaction 1994.

8. Vic De Donder, quoted in 'de Volkskrant' of 1 April 1994.

9. Het Klimaat: buitenlandse beeldend kunstenaars in Nederland. Den Haag: Culturele Raad Zuid-Holland, 1991, p.55.

10. Cornel West, 'The new cultural politics of difference'. In: Out There; marginalisation and contemporary cultures. Ed. by R. Ferguson, M. Gever, T.T. Minh-ha, C. West. New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990, p. 36.

11. P. Bourdieu. Opstellen over smaak, habitus en het veldbegrip. Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1989, pp. 34-37.

DISCUSSION WITH

Rasheed Araeen and Ria Lavrijsen

> ### Ria Lavrijsen:

You said that the West is still imposing imperial ideology and you know that people like Bhabha and Said have said quite a few times that it is almost impossible to speak about one West, that there are many Wests. I myself am a product of the West for instance. Sometimes, to get into a debate, I got the feeling from your interview in Magazine of the Museum of Modern Art that you use a kind of political rhetoric which is not completely right.

> ### Rasheed Araeen:

I am surprised that you make this comment because in your own paper you suggested that spaces available in museums are not free of ideology, so what ideology do you refer to? I am sure you referred to the dominant ideology. When I speak about the ideology of the West, I mean the legacy of the colonial empire. In my view, although the rest of the colonised world is struggling to decolonise themselves, the West has not seen itself as in a position to change its institutional structures. One of the ways artists legitimise is in discourse, the most legitimised way is the marketplace. But history has proved that the marketplace is not really appropriate as judgement of what happens in terms of significant work for a special period. I can take up a well known example: Cezanne, van Gogh et cetera were not successful while others were. History has shown that Cezanne and van Gogh were more significant for artistic developments. The problem here is the construction of art history as a legitimising process.

> ### Ria Lavrijsen:

 Construction of art history is questioned.

> ### Rasheed Araeen:

By whom?

> ### Ria Lavrijsen:

By women, art historians, there is a debate going on. For instance here in Rotterdam, Chris Dercon is committed to support the INEVA Institute. That dynamic is going on in the West.

> ### Rasheed Araeen:

I am not saying that it is not questioned. I do believe in change. And true, the feminists have questioned art history, but only from the point of view of gender. There has not been substantial work done yet in terms of correlation, of excluding the so called other from art

history. Look at a practical level. Can you name any art book of the 20th century which includes Asian or Chinese artists? I am not talking about artists in the non-West, but they who have lived and worked here. If you consider the colonial state as a historical state, it appears to be valid. For Hegel says that history belongs to the liberated people. In other words, history belongs to the master, not to the slaves. What happens after the decolonisation? After the slave has liberated him/her self from the clutch of their master, we can continue perceiving that art history in Hegelian terms. The Hegelian construction of art history still persists, despite of the questioning from feminists and some radical art historians.

> Ria Lavrijsen:

In the interview in the Magazine of the Museum of Modern Art you referred to Anish Kapoor who according to you, accepted happily this role of being celebrated as part of the multi-cultural art scene. Is it not possible that people were just fond of his work and thought highly of its quality? It seems as if you judge him for being accepted as an artist. This means the change we all want to take place.

> Rasheed Araeen:

Why do you bring Anish Kapoor into the discussion? He is not an individual case. I studied the whole history. Artists moving to the artistic centres is not a new phenomenon. Picasso moved from Spain to Paris, just because it was good for the development of his artistic talents. So did Brancusi, so did Mondriaan. It has always been like that. In the fifties, artists from India came to Britain, artists from other far away countries came to the cities of Europe, that was a normal phenomenon; artists went where they could materialize their ambition. A new and post war phenomenon was the mass immigration, the spread of foreign communities in Europe.

If you look at the critical discourse, at the writing about the work of artists from India, the Caribbean and so on, it was always exoticised. All the successful artists had something to do with exoticism. Artists of the non-West dealing with avant-garde history, with avant-garde material, are not accepted. In some cases they are ahead of their white contemporaries. They question the whole history. And these artists have been and are ignored. Why? They must act as an agent of their own culture, and take the position between cultures. There are artists who refuse that in-between space and they do not enter the discourse. Then in the 80's Anish Kapoor shows up with his whole idea of Indianess. He was celebrated because he exhibited his cultural background.

> Gavin Jantjes:

There are some assumptions when we talk about this. The first is the concept of diversity. Two years ago I discovered that in 1928 there was a large Russian community in Berlin. Berlin had six Russian banks, three daily Russian newspapers and 86 Russian publishers. The area of Charlottenburg was called Charlottengrad. Being in Berlin today, you find no trace, no reference of this major introduction of Russian culture into the city, it simply vanished. This is an incredible phenomenon. We can take this back even further in history, there are other examples. The question of diversity has always emerged as a threat on our doorsteps.

You said that a lot of artists are spending their energy on their cultural identity. That is an assumption. I think you should recognise that. We as artists are all practising in our profession. We do not spend the majority of our time with things concerning our identity. We do it here at this symposium because we were invited to do so. Yesterday we talked about cause and effect, the reason, even the necessity for artists to invent identity. We are caught in that situation that we have to talk about our cultural background in presentations, to invent our cultural identity, to enter the mainstream.

IMAGINED
CONSTRUCTS

Gavin Jantjes

As the last speaker at this symposium, I am aware that some of the things I am about to say have been offered to you by previous speakers. I am therefore in a 'catch twenty-two' situation, being forced to repeat the already stated in order to make my point. I must ask you to bear with me when I do this.

When a symposium comes to an end and the participants feel that they have gained a new insight, they want to return to their homes and do something about it. What I will try to do is to be a bit more practical in my approach. I hope that in the discussion later we can look at the many options for action or action plans.

Let me start by saying that the choice of title for this part of the symposium brings with it a sense of apprehension.

'The 'Gestalt' of a Seventh Continent'? Am I being asked to put words to an idea that has no foundation in reality? Am I to give a fiction a function? Is the task one of stretching the imagination, stretching terminologies, in the same way that the term 'Third World' splits humanity into the those who have and those who have not?

In the 'Gestaltung' of the great land masses of the planet I believe it would be good to start with a spatial concept that is more immediate, accessible and real. A space close enough and small enough, in which life can be grasped and interpreted. Home is a more logical place to start.

For most of us, home is the centre of the world in both the geographical and ontological sense. Everything that is not home floats outside it in some sort of wilderness, or jungle. Uninterpretable spaces, fluid spaces, full of chaos. Home locates the place from which we understand the world. From within its centre we grasp and control its interior space; learn to recognise its depth, its volume and its boarders. Home is not imagined, it is real. From within, we become cognisant of the wider world. Inside home there is integrity and solidity. Outside there exists an imagined, ever present threat to the order within. Outside there is a lack of order, a fluidity, a chaos. We approach the outside with the intention to control, and to order its apparent chaos, to channel its fluidity. We insist that the outsider, on crossing the threshold of home, conforms to the order within.

In the part of the world where most of us locate home, there is a desire to live within an imagined construct. One which over time has been reinforced by text and images, until the imagined transforms into something real. Take the word 'Europe' as an example. It is imagined. Its Gestalt is conceptual. There is no fixed terrain marking a space called Europe. There is no fixed definition of a European. Yet over this century, a verbal and linguistic refinement

has attached to the word Europe another imagined concept, namely 'Western'. Together these have been re-enforced with hegemonic absolutes that claim Western Europe to be our post modern present; the only relevant crossroad in human development; the first civilisation to make the cultural shift from communality to individuality et cetera. Our sense of home has been infused with a defined linguistic and visual mythology, which is taken for granted.

If it is expected that I give a Gestalt to an imaginary seventh continent, to construct a myth, I am going to disappoint you. Not because I don't want ro indulge in a fanrasy in public. As an artist, one does this all the time. But because I am an artist, I am much more interested in 'Umgestaltung, in a re-making of concepts rooted in reality. In this case, the reality of a six continent planet divided into so called First, Third and Developing worlds and on top of which sits this concept of Western Europe as the exclusive citadel for the ideas and images that gives Gestalt to a modernist, even a post modernist definition of the arts. In short, I am for a reformulation of how we perceive the world and in particular, how this perception effects cultural relations on a national and European level.

The collapse of colonialism and the dramatic changes emerging in late capitalism have brought us face to face with the realisation that Western eurocentric cultural hegemony is at an end. European colonialism has left all of us its appalling legacy of a world with displaced peoples, cultures and concepts of identity. The fashionable discourse of 'Europe and the cultural other' which opened this century - I am speaking here of Braque, Vlaminck, Picasso, Derain, the interest in 'Neger Plastik', Gaugain's Journeys to Polynesia et cetera - this debate has at its close become a debate about 'Europe as other'. Europe examining itself in the same manner it once did others, questioning its ethnicity and the cross cultural referencing of its identity. In depth examinations of European cultural histories now excavate a past that thrived on syncretism and diversity, denying the claims by European xenophobes, both past and present, of a purity of language, traditions and cultures. One can no longer escape the bastardised nature of its cultural growth.

Something Europeans previously saw as a negative in other civilisations.

What confronts European politicians, cultural bureaucrats and ordinary citizens is a huge question about their conviction to these changes and to respond to the debate of 'Europe as other'. Are we prepared to find alternatives beyond the 18th century answers which have cornered European cultural thought into the cul-de-sac of racist xenophobia and still abounds in many of the institutions? Are we willing to answer the quintessential questions 'Who am I? Who are we? Who are they?'

If we are sincere and committed to an authentic response, then the time has come to say clearly where and how we place the achievements of individuals like Josephine Baker, James Baldwin, Americans who spent a large part of their lives in France. Or international artists like Wilfredo Lam, Nam June Paik, Anish Kapoor, Zaha Hadid. Or more local figures like Felix De Rooy, Joseph Semah or Benni Effrat, Eddie Jarram and Hulya Yilmaz who all live in Holland. What do we do with Jazz, Rock, the Blues, Rap, Reggae, Jungle music, and exactly how does Salman Rushdie fit into things European? Are we willing to act upon the intelligent and progressive responses offered by those interested in the 'Umgestaltung' of cultural norms, and those affected by the status quo? In short: are we prepared to listen, to learn and to act?

It would be good to see all the galleries and museums of Europe's great cities take on the problem of reforming a national visual identity that includes 'new Europeans'. By that I mean artists who through birth or circumstance are attached to cultural roots outside Europe but practice here within it. It would be good to witness curatorial and museuological support in the debate for a more inclusive national culture. One that makes the contribution of such artists a plausible and desirable objective for the future.

In the arenas of cuisine, sport, entertainment and science, the contributions of new Europeans are acknowledged however small. Bringing strange new food from the outside into the home is a fact of our time. It has changed how and what we cook and eat. This should have a parallel in the visual arts.

We allow our taste buds the delight of difference but we have yet to experience such a dynamic in the atena of visual culture, and in a manner that indicates a change in our perceptions of a national culture.

The perspectives taken by new European artists on the composition of your national culture and how they locate themselves in it, may be different from the vantage point of accepted institutional norms. Their views may be taken from the edges, or amazingly from the centre itself, It may draw a tangent from another unexpected position away from the centre, away from home. These artists creative visions may vitalise a culture by highlighting difference. It may on the other hand make readings of a culture that challenges a racial, sexual or religious exclusivity. Both contributions are possible and both could be positive.

There is also a need to change the semantics of the debate about cultural difference, cultural plurality and identity. Attitudes and concepts need to shift from 'ethnic arts', a term I have never understood, to cultural diversity and the ultimate recognition of an emergent, new internationalism. If artists are to become part of the body of a national culture, they should not be excluded semantically. Debates which insist on describing artists as parenthesised 'foreigners', 'immigrants', 'exiles', 'visitors', 'guests' or the general term 'them', have not considered why citizens of a sovereign European state should be described in this way. I emphasise this because most of these artists are citizens by birth or have become nationals of the countries they live and work in.

The visual arts suffer from institutional structures which are very top heavy. My task here is not to analyze this but to point to the hierarchical position of museums and galleries in the interpretation of a national culture. Run by professional curators, art historians and the like, it is their judgement on what constitutes a nations visual culture that ultimately gives it a gestalt. If they cannot accept a diversity and heterogeneity in visual expression, these debates will remain theoretical exercises in post modernity. A vogue of a liberal minded post modern generation that will be replaced by the next fad the arts' media cooks up.

For the cultural institutions to become pro-active in the recognition of a new

European art and a new internationalism, it is important that the works of these artists are given professional curatorial attention, discussed critically, researched in depth, and professionally documented - that is what is done in the so called mainstteam. Experience tells me that lower down the institutional structures and certainly outside them, the debate will continue for years with the converted preaching to each other. Neither the institutions nor the state should wait for a ground swell revolt before tangible change occurs in the upper echelons of the museums and galleries. They should act, not in haste but boldly and knowledgeably.

The key action from the point of view of both the museums and the galleries and the artists, is the debate of the images created. For it is through an understanding of the images that this expression gains significance.

Controversy about discussing images arises all the time in the visual arts. In the European mainstream, it is the taste of the connoisseurs versus those of the public. In our case, it is primarily around two issues. Firstly, the deliberate disinterest by the institutional museums and galleries to recognise that a synarctic European art or an extra European art exists, and that it can be of high quality and more than just an ethnic fad or fashion. Secondly, that both parties, artists and institutions, recognise that the creation and discussion of images demands a level of trust and open-mindedness on both parts. What both are engaged in is an act of interpretation and translation. Of their ability to construct and to read without being constrained by either the trope of tradition or assumptions dressed up as knowledge.

The majority of new European artists align to the Umgestaltung's principal I outlined earlier. Like me, they are not in the business of making art in order to construct the myths of others. They want their images to serve their own myth making and in the deconstruction of the myths of others. The aim of their expression is to make new readings possible. To re-describe the Gestalt of the old world with their own images in order that they may be included in future definitions of the new.

The making of images precludes that between maker and viewer there is a language. Not the language of classical novels with its fixed grammar etceteta, but something more akin to poetry. I am

speaking here of a visual language which is not fashioned to trace a tradition but built on the foundations of a kinetic and heterogeneous experience of the possibility of language; an image/language which does not explain but is; an organic, living condition that arises through the exchange and interplay of images.

Constructing images and making poetic readings also precludes that there is both a territory in which language operates as a naming device, and readers able to use the autographic and manographic marks left in space by artists, as catalysts for their imagination.

The artists or authors of the images create languages that transgress or float between contemporary European practices and other, extra European ones. They mark our visual space with syncretic codes and signs which aim to evolve visual expression, broaden, extend and enlarge it. They seek to fashion unique sets of images from their plural experience of the worlds cultures, and manufacture polyvalent visual messages which allow a re-examination of fixed traditions. Often the images they construct dislocate the established viewpoint of Europe's hegemonic art and history, and their art claims contemporanity because it has critically assessed and acted upon its own condition.

This double movement within visual language, the re-fashioning of a tongue and a re-positioning of our view of the world, has a parallel in the field of geography. To those of us who have grown up with the standard Mercator map of the world, the map of Arno Peters is a shocking revelation. Peters simple alteration to the language of map making was to construct a world map using an equal area grid. He was simply being democratic, knowing that such a grid would show each of the six continents of the world in their relative size to each other. He gives one a view of the world that shattered four hundred years of so called knowledge. For the first time, one sees the world not more accurately but more honestly. This new world view re-positions us all on planet earth and acknowledging such shifts of our global view will have repercussions on our regional and local perceptions. The difficulty has been to get the people of Europe to accept the shift, to accept the symbolism of the Peters map. The television stations, newspapers, school

book publishers, even travel agents, are reticent about accepting the Peters projection. Old notions die hard.

A good example is the chain of thought that a fortress like Europe will secure the states in its union against change. That an emigration policy that aims to keep others out and Europeans in, also closes down any talk of plural, heterogeneous national cultures. What this line of thought excludes from its thesis is the realisation that cultural growth results from the seismic contact of cultures and people, that the reciprocal exchange which occurs at the interface of our meetings with others, creates the compost from which new cultural expression will grow. Fortress Europe is in fact the antithesis of what has been recognised by Europeans themselves as Western/European modernity. Modernity's thesis was the progress of humankind on the basis of constructive self criticism and exchange. 'Fortress Europe' simply echoes the assumptions of old pre-modernistic hegemonies.

I believe that at the heart of the debate of 'Europe as other' there has emerged a new concept of the term international. In modernism, the term has deteriorated to become a euphemism for the West and Europe. It was an exclusive term in which the activities of others were relegated to a time past. In post modernity the term has been inverted. Internationalism has once again become an inclusive term which embraces all of human kind, including Europe and the West. It accepts the heterogeneity of cultural expression. Our job as mediators of cultural achievement is to make this new concept of internationalism accessible, understandable and acceptable.

This brings me back full circle to my starting remarks. What is to be done? I cannot tell you what to do, or how to move from ethnicity to internationalism. I can only point to options and examples of good practice elsewhere. It is no coincidence that four of the speakers to this symposium come from England. A few more could easily have spoken on the vexed question of Western cultural dominance. Certain achievements give England a leading role in this field of debate. (Perhaps the only field it will ever lead its fellow Union States on.) The four speakers embody the essence of this debate through their person. They do not speak

from second hand experience but from their living engagement with this debate. Over in England, it has long been realised that one cannot progress the debate about diversity without the will, the views and the hands-on action of those who brought the issue of new internationalism (perhaps very messily) to the debating table. In short, diversity is a question of empowering people to make change happen themselves. Changes to the geographic and ontological sense of home.

In answering the quintessential question of our time, 'who am I?', the 'I' must be allowed to have a voice. Ventriloquising for others is paternalism. We must allow everyone to listen to that voice and to support the progressive things it asks of us. Not to stand in its way and blockade progress but to create many windows of opportunity through which the voices can travel out and beyond and back.

We live in a time in which communication technology is changing the transportation and exchange of information at such a speed that it will transform human relations quicker than any other piece of technology before it. The impact of computers, CD-rom and interactive audio visual media, the Internet, is upon us. If we do not strive to use these technologies in our mediation of a contemporary new international art in Europe, it will be used for other things. The next generation of young people who engage with the arts, will want to manipulate such information, navigate through its layers of data, call up movable images, listen to the voices of artists, even talk directly to artists via the Internet.

I myself am concerned with this particular development, researching artists in Europe in order to construct CD Roms and

float my research findings on the Internet, in collaboration with INiVA and other partners. I believe that the acceptance of such research findings into the institutional hierarchies will allow it to filter down from there to primary levels of education. I do not believe that the way for a cultural education on this subject can emerge from the bottom, that plans for action should have primary school and high school as their target, that the debate about Europe as other is carried out at the level of community grass roots, while the institutions at the top continue in their old ways to deal with it as a side issue of their presenting, explaining and collecting contemporary art. The heretical structures of the visual arts that I mentioned earlier, makes the information flow a top down operation. It has never been the other way around.

It would be good to see main stream institutions invest in the communications revolution, so as to help in the search for a better understanding of the international voices in Europe's contemporary visual art, to gain a more profound knowledge of the images and of their plural cultural histories. They do not have to undertake the research themselves, there are many of us doing that already. But they have a role to support the good work being done in many European cities by many individuals. Therein lies a way forward.

It is always good to talk about change today. But it helps little if there are no clear plans of action for tomorrow. Lets go from here and take with us two things on our journey, an open mind approach to the images artists place before us and the Gestalt of the world according to Arno Peters.

Gavin Jantjes is an artist, curator and seniorlecturer at the Chelsea College of Art, London University.

22

DISCUSSION WITH
Marianne Brouwer and Gavin Jantjes

> Gavin Jantjes:

Marianne Brouwer said in her lecture that it is impossible to have contemporary art in a country that is not industrial. Why do you believe that?

> Marianne Brouwer:

Because industrialisation, capitalism is in fact, I think, the basis of a society that is constructed completely differently from traditional societies as we have known in the Middle Ages in Europe as they have continued to be in what we are calling the Third World. I think that the structure of societies that are living in a theocratic way have a completely different way of integrating. Capitalism has put everything on the market. It has created art objects instead of a notion of art that is inserted into society where it does not even need the name of art. Let us say that the art object is very deeply associated with contemporary loneliness, a kind of loneliness that starts to exist when God is dead. People are responsible for themselves. I think all this happened in Europe with industrialisation. I see things happening very similar for instance in Japan and China, two examples of very quickly modernized, industrialised countries. I said earlier that I believe in this combination. Marx might be a very old fashioned name these days, but I still believe in the combination of economy and culture. Not as a superstructure, not in the orthodox marxistic way, but it is generating a world view, a way of seeing things and creating things which comes directly out of the economical situation or revolution or whatever you may call it. I have the feeling that these kind of revolutions are taking place all over the globe.

> Gavin Jantjes:

If you have been in countries which even today you could call unindustrialized, and stumble across an artist who is making a contemporary visual expression which could be quite significant in terms of his or her ability as an individual to accept a process of self criticism and a process of self examination of the culture he or she may live in and to respond that, surely that is a much more pragmatic definition of how you arrive at the term contemporary art.

> Marianne Brouwer:

This is a thing I did not want to get into. Because I do not know anything about these definitions of ethnic art.

> Gavin Jantjes:

That has ro do with the assumptions that contemporary art is art from an artist who is alive today or art made with contemporary materials, and I do not think that those are the right criteria for us. Contemporary art is very much about critical self reflection on both the environment and the condition of the art, so you can have somebody sitting down and making little sculptures, being just as dynamic as Richard Deacon, and he could do this in the Amazona jungle and he is reflecting on that. When his woodcarvings reflect that, you have got a very difficult position. Where ro locate an artist like that when you stick ro the definition that contemporary art is only in the industrialized countries?

> Marianne Brouwer:

I think industrialized societies produce contemporaty art, I really do believe that. Take Greece, there was no contemporary art for a long long time. I think it has to do with the fact that Greece is not an industrialized country, that it is still very much a theocracy. People like Kounnellis left Greece because they could not make contemporary art in Greece. They had to go to Italy to find out what contemporary art was.

> Franz Kaiser:

To understand the notion of art you have to go back to its roots. There are assumptions underlying modernism. Max Weber understood culture as a culture that is specialized, in which there are special spheres. One of these social spheres was art, was culture. The difference between art as a special cultural sphere and art in other cultures is that art is secular and has its own institutions. In the discussions on multiculturalism, it is important to see the difference between this cultural concept of art and the so called 'other cultures' and not to make everything the same like media culture does.

> Gavin Jantjes:

Do you think we should see culture in the way Weber did, as a separate entity?

> Franz Kaiser:

No, but when we discuss it we have to know where it comes from. Elaborating on the concept of art, the problem when you bring art from other countries to the West, what is its place in the institutions here?

> Rasheed Araeen:

I agree with the thesis that modern art is only in industrial, capitalist society. At the same time I think a change is taking place. It does not make sense any longer to say modern art is only in the West and in certain parts of the world that have reached a certain stage in development like Japan and China, otherwise we fall into the same trap of thinking in higher and lower development.

The second thing is that you do not make a distinction between making things and making things as a work of art. Making a work of art involves a consciousness, an awareness. The artist asks himself: 'why am I making this object?' He is aware of making a work of art and he is aware of the institutions. Human beings are always expressing themselves without being conscience of it and taking the role of an artist.

> Gavin Jantjes:

I was attending a conference at the Hayward Gallery where an exhibition of Aborigenese art was held, and there was a satellite connection between Aboriginal artists and the villages of the outback of Australia and none of us knew how to deal with this technology, for them it was something they use every day. That is how they communicated with each other. They took over the conference for more than an hour, talking about family matters and so on. It was striking, suddenly I found myself in the position where these assumptions about the Aboriginese level of industrialization and so on did not make any sense at all.

> Marianne Brouwer:

I said that choosing Japan and China was to limit myself. I had no right to take objects from any kind of world and curate them myself as was done in Magiciens de la Terre. That was

the reason why I want a completely equal debate. The assumption of making contemporary art was already in the art work. Not generated by me, put in a different context like a kind of ethnological museum. I wanted to avoid that. It is a kind of hypothesis 'how did modern art come into being?'. In Europe it was the industrial time in the 18th century that brought it forth. All the ideologies, the humanistic approach of the human body and soul, the ego, the expressionism of van Gogh, is inherent in that tradition.

> Gavin Jantjes:

The way in which you describe it, parallel to that development, the colonisation of the rest of the world took place. The new industrialising European societies, neo-colonising other societies, go through a similar series of crises having to deal with individuality, with confrontation of a new phenomenon in their society. These things have parallels, so it is not simply a question of exclusion. There are always shocking revelations, while this is happening here, something else very similar is happening in another place, and cause and effect of one and another are linked and that is what is so exciting about the research.

> Rasheed Araeen:

It was not merely colonisation. Apart from that, new educational institutions were set up, in India for example. The set up of art schools in the late 19th century were patterned after London. What they did was replace their own tradition with the European concept of art which emphasizes the concept of the artist as an individual. So modernity developed in the colonised countries.

> Franz Kaiser:

We must realize that these developments are historical. Europe developed from a religious culture into a rational culture earlier than the non-Western world. But that is only a matter of delay. The other cultures are catching up very fast. The gap becomes smaller and smaller. The question is going to be if art will survive at all. The struggle will no longer be between art of the West and the non-Western world but between art and media culture. We have to defend spaces for art, for the higher culture.

> Gavin Jantjes:

I do not see the threat of mass culture overtaking art. Artists have proved themselves to be extremely resilient and proving art to be a multi-headed serpent. Tell me today that painting is dead and I guarantee you, tomorrow it will emerge somewhere else. It is not in the institutions, it is in the desire of human beings to not allow that to happen. The work of art has the energy of what artists do. They shape, invent, constantly thinking things through and sticking their necks out to have their heads cut off, but knowing too well they can pick it up and plant it back somewhere else tomorrow. They are a pretty resilient gang of people.

> Marianne Brouwer:

I want to tell you about an experience I had seeing an exhibition at Oxford that David Elliot had curated. The work by Huang Yong Ping was again at the entrance of the museum. He had put together ten live scorpions and a thousand live locusts and the whole work was called 'the yellow peril'. I thought it was absolutely marvellous, this turning around and putting the fear of gold into you. What made this exhibition so special, was that for one moment I was turned into the other. It felt like something I did not want to feel. It felt threatening, a position you do not want to hold.

> Gavin Jantjes:

We came to a kind of agreement yesterday about being prepared to drop culture as a concept and actually going back to the origins of concepts which are pure humanitarian concepts of civilisation. A very primary concept, very valid. What is scary about it is that it has so often been misused. The same thing can be said about the word tradition. People freak out when you talk about it. It originally had very positive connotations. Over the years it has obtained negative connotations. Let us take one step back and look at where we once were and think about that before we take the next step. Let Europe for a moment be the other. When I

was in art school and we picked up the history books and there we all were, the Chinese, the Indians, Europeans, Australians altogether and then came the 19th and 20th centuries and boom! we had disappeared. Three quarters of the world population! Every fourth person on this planet is an oriental. And now for the first time we see contemporary Chinese art. That frightens me, that needs to be changed. We must have that sense of unbalance in our view of the world and how we locate ourselves. The Peters map is very symbolic here. It says 'just reposition yourself, do not be presumptuous about who you think you are and where you think you are'. The Peters projection is only used in India in the daily news program. We need to make that shift in our perspective.